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# BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 5

THE SPOTTED SIX  
or The Mystery of  
Calvert Hallway



BY  
FRED THORPE

The hideous creature uttered a strange cry, sprang forward, seized the boy in his powerful arms, and hurried with him to the furnace door.



# BRAVE & BOLD

*A Different Complete Story Every Week*

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## THE SPOTTED SIX;

OR,

### The Mystery of Calvert Hathaway.

By FRED THORPE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### A LETTER MARKED "PERSONAL."

Dick Firman, the young shipping clerk at Forster & Co.'s great wholesale dry goods house, had two startling surprises one day in October, 1889.

At about ten o'clock in the morning he was summoned to the private office of Mr. Basil Forster (who, we may state, was the sole owner of the business, the "Co." having long since ceased to exist.

"What can the trouble be?" muttered Dick, who was a fine-looking lad of about sixteen. "Hope he isn't going to give me a raking on account of that misdirected bale yesterday; it wasn't my fault, and I can prove it."

His fears were disarmed, however, when he entered the private office, and confronted Mr. Forster.

The merchant's face wore a genial smile, as he said:

"Good-morning, Firman. Sit down."

Dick seated himself, asking, diffidently:

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Forster?"

"Yes. You have been in my employ a year, Firman."

"I have sir; and I hope I have given satisfaction."

"You have, Firman. I gave you a position here on account of my great friendship for your dead father, to whom I was bound by very strong ties.

"Have you noticed the absence of Mr. Burville to-day?" asked the merchant, abruptly.

"The head bookkeeper? Yes, sir. We have all been wondering if he was sick."

"He is in jail," said Mr. Forster.

"In jail, sir?" cried the startled boy.

"In jail, my lad. I have suspected him of dishonesty for some time, and a few days ago, unknown to him, I set an expert to examine his books, and a detective to watch him."

"And the result, sir?"

"Was that I discovered myself to be a loser of about fifty thousand dollars through him and the cashier, Marks, with whom he was in collusion. Both men were arrested last night."

Dick was speechless with surprise; he had always looked upon Messrs. Burville and Marks as models of integrity.

"Now, I must find successors for both," resumed Mr. Forster. "I have already given the position of cashier to Marks' former assistant: how would you like to be appointed head bookkeeper?"

"I? Why—that is, sir—you don't mean it!" stammered Dick.

"Oh, yes, I do," smiled the merchant. "What do you say?"

"Of course, I would like the position."

At this moment, the door of the private office opened, and a clerk entered, saying:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Forster, but among the mail was this letter, marked 'Personal.'"

"Very well; let me have it, Brown," said the merchant.

Having delivered the letter, the clerk withdrew.

There was a smile on the old gentleman's face as he opened the envelope. But, as he gazed at its contents, an expression that Dick could only interpret as one of abject terror appeared upon his countenance.

"My God, at last!" he murmured.



The envelope and contents—a sheet of paper and a card—fell from his hand to the floor; his head sank on his breast.

"Mr. Forster, you are ill!" cried the boy, springing forward.

The next moment he saw that his companion had fainted.

Acting upon his first impulse, he picked up the sheet of paper and the card.

The former was entirely blank, but the latter bore this strange inscription:

*"The Spotted Six Survives!"*

The thought rushed through Dick's mind that this mysterious communication must certainly be of a very confidential nature, and he hurriedly opened one of the drawers in Mr. Forster's desk and thrust it in.

Then he summoned one of his fellow-clerks, telling him that he feared their employer was very ill.

His first thought had been that Mr. Forster was a victim of apoplexy, but this did not prove to be the case.

In a few minutes the merchant had recovered consciousness. Gazing wildly about him, he cried, in a hoarse, unnatural voice:

"Where are they—the letter—the card?"

"I put them in that drawer in your desk, sir," replied Dick, pointing to the receptacle to which he had consigned the mysterious communication.

"Very good! Leave me."

Dick and his companion left the room.

"You and he haven't had any sort of a row, have you?" said Watson, the other clerk. "You were in there with him some time."

"Row!" laughed the boy. "Nothing of the sort. We had a mighty pleasant interview, I can tell you, and during it Mr. Forster appointed me head bookkeeper."

"Head bookkeeper!" exclaimed Watson, who did not seem as well pleased at this information as Dick had expected. "Then what becomes of Burville?"

Dick hesitated a moment, not thinking it advisable to repeat what his employer had told him.

"He has been retired," he said. "You'll know the reason soon."

This appointment to the position of head bookkeeper was Dick Firman's first surprise that morning; the second came half an hour later.

He was summoned again to the merchant's private office, and greeted with these words, uttered in a harsh, peremptory tone:

"Firman, you are discharged!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SECRET OF A WASTE-BASKET.

If Dick Firman's employer had struck him, he could not have been more amazed.

The smile with which he had entered the room faded from his face, and he stammered:

"Wh-what did you say, sir?"

"I think you understand me, Firman," replied Mr. Forster, who was maintaining his composure with a very evident effort.

"You—you said I was discharged?"

"I did."

"But only a few minutes ago you appointed me head bookkeeper!"

"Yes; but you cannot remain in this establishment as head bookkeeper, shipping clerk, or in any other capacity.

"You cannot remain here in any capacity whatever," went on Mr. Forster, "and it is my wish that you go at once. Your week's

salary will be paid you; but you must not ask me for a reference."

"What does all this mean, sir?" burst from the boy's lips. "Just now you were overwhelming me with compliments; now you discharge me without even allowing me the privilege of referring to you. I should like an explanation."

"You will get none," was the reply. "I am not in the habit of bandying words with my employees. Leave this office!"

Dick had a hot temper, and it was thoroughly roused now.

Approaching the merchant's desk, he said, in a loud, angry voice:

"I will do nothing of the sort, sir! I demand an explanation—I will have it!"

"You will have nothing of the sort, sir!" returned Mr. Forster, his face flushing. "I am not accustomed to being dictated to by my employees. Go!"

"I'll make you regret this to your dying day!" almost shouted the excited boy. "You'll be sorry before many hours have passed that you ever——"

He was interrupted by a smooth, oily voice behind him:

"Shall I put the fellow out, Mr. Forster? Excuse me for entering, but I heard angry voices, and feared you were being annoyed."

The speaker was Watson, who stood on the threshold, rubbing his hands and bowing low.

"You put me out!" cried Dick. "You'd better not try it, Watson, if you know what is good for you! I'll go out of my own accord, however, at once."

With these words, the disappointed, humiliated boy left the office.

The strange events of the morning puzzled as much as they troubled him, but the mystery would have seemed still deeper if he had been a witness of Mr. Forster's movements after his departure.

Having closed and locked the door of the private office, the merchant sank into his chair, and buried his face in his trembling hands, murmuring:

"After all these years! What will their next move be? I am lost!"

\* \* \* \* \*

At half-past six that evening, Dick Firman returned to Forster & Co.'s.

As he expected, he found no one there but old Mrs. Riley, the scrubwoman.

"Sure, an' did ye fergit somethin'?" she asked.

Dick saw at once that she did not know of his discharge, and he was glad of it.

"Yes, I forgot something, Mrs. Riley," he replied, hurriedly; "I'm going to get it now."

He walked back to Mr. Forster's private office, and closed the door.

Dick had done a good deal of thinking since his discharge that morning, and he had been forced to the conclusion that the letter which had agitated Mr. Forster so greatly had had something to do with his sudden dismissal.

And he resolved to return to the store, and gain possession of it, if possible.

The sheet had, at a glance, appeared to Dick to be blank; but he told himself that he might have been mistaken on that point; at all events, he knew he could identify it, if he found it, for it was of a peculiar shade of blue, which he had never before seen.

To his joy, he found that the waste-paper basket had not yet been disturbed by Mrs. Riley, whose duty it was to empty it every night.



He knelt beside it, and began examining its contents, with nervous hands.

In a few moments, an excited cry escaped his lips.

Almost at the bottom of the basket, he had found the sheet for which he was in search; evidently, Mr. Forster had crushed it in his hand, with fierce energy, before he flung it from him.

As Dick opened it, a card fell from it—the same that he had seen that morning, bearing the strange words:

*"The Spotted Six Survives!"*

For a few moments the boy studied the mysterious inscription attentively.

It was written in a bold, firm, masculine hand, and each word was underlined.

"The Spotted Six Survives," muttered the boy. "Now, what the mischief can that mean? Let me take a look at the paper; perhaps that will tell the secret."

But it did not. The sheet was perfectly blank; in fact, it was in precisely the same condition in which Mr. Forster had received it, except that, burned exactly in its center, there was a small, round hole, about half an inch in diameter.

"I'll unearth the mystery before I'm done!" cried Dick, as he arose and put the paper and card in his pocket.

Then it occurred to him that he ought, if possible, to possess himself of the envelope in which the blank sheet and the card had been inclosed.

He had no difficulty in finding it in the waste-paper basket. The superscription was in the same handwriting as that upon the card; the postmark was New York.

"I'll keep this, too," said Dick, thrusting the envelope into his pocket; "and it'll be hard luck if I don't get to the bottom of this business, sooner or later."

He hurried out of the store, scarcely heeding Mrs. Riley's good-natured "Good-night, an' good luck ter ye."

The first thing that met Dick Firman's eyes in the paper the next morning was this heading:

"ANOTHER MURDER MYSTERY.

"STRANGE ASSASSINATION OF BASIL FORSTER."

### CHAPTER III.

ENOS GRITMAN, THE MYSTERY.

The murder of the merchant-philanthropist, Basil Forster, presented many strange features.

He had been found lying in his bed, a stiletto buried in his heart; and, pinned to his breast by this same stiletto, was a paper bearing the singular inscription:

*"The Spotted Six Survives!"*

The first to discover the crime was Mr. Forster's valet, one Pierre Valette, who, when his master had failed to respond to his knock, had burst open the door of his sleeping-room, and found him lying dead on the bed.

Dr. W. B. Curtis, the physician summoned, testified, in substance, as follows:

"Mr. Forster had been dead about one hour when I arrived. The stiletto, which was an extremely slender one, had penetrated the arch of the aorta, causing instant death. There was no external bleeding. The theory of suicide is not to be entertained for a moment. It is a case of murder, and the crime was committed by some one well versed in anatomy. The blow was struck by a

sure hand in exactly the right place to produce an instantaneously fatal result."

The police were much more puzzled than Dr. Curtis; in fact, they were unable, at the time the report of the terrible crime was sent to the morning papers, to advance a theory upon any point, except the mere fact that Mr. Basil Forster had died at the hand of an assassin.

How had the murderer entered the house?

There was but one door to Mr. Forster's room—that which Pierre Valette had burst open—and the key was on the inside.

There were two windows looking out upon the street; one was locked, and the other unfastened, but closed. But the room was on the second story of the mansion, too high to be reached by any ordinary ladder, even if the murderer had had the daring to raise one.

These were the particulars which Dick Firman read at the breakfast table, and which effectually destroyed his appetite.

To the surprise of the other boarders, who had been in the habit of "guying" him on account of his phenomenal appetite, he pushed his plate aside, and rose from the table, saying:

"I don't want any breakfast."

And he hurried from the room, to avoid questioning.

"Guess Firman's in love," giggled young Beardsley, the ribbon-counter clerk.

"Tisn't love," said Mr. Enos Gritman, laconically.

It was so seldom that Mr. Gritman spoke at the table that every one started in surprise.

"Maybe he didn't like his breakfast," suggested the landlady.

"'Twasn't that," said Mr. Gritman, rising from the table. "Breakfast, all right; love theory, nonsense."

And he, too, abruptly took his departure, leaving his breakfast almost untouched.

This was the longest speech he had ever made since he had been an inmate of the boarding house.

Enos Gritman was considered a "queer fish" by all his fellow-boarders.

He was a long, lank, smooth-faced man of about forty-five, who seemed to be constitutionally unable or unwilling to utter more than a word or two at a time, except on rare occasions, like the one just chronicled.

The only person in the house for whom he seemed to have any liking was Dick Firman, but even in talking with the boy his conversation was confined to monosyllables.

Just what Mr. Gritman's business was nobody seemed to know; it was generally agreed by the boarders that he was an old bachelor, who had been crossed in love early in life, and was living on his income.

After he left the table, his footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, after which a knock was plainly audible upon the door of Dick's room.

Mr. Gritman was admitted to Dick's room.

His first words, as he entered, were:

"'Spotted Six!' queer business—eh?"

These words startled the boy not a little.

"You have read— You know—" he stammered.

"Know what you were thinking about," interrupted Mr. Gritman. "The 'Spotted Six,' wasn't it?"

"Yes; but how did you know?"

"Saw you reading account of murder—saw you start when you read those words."

"You are very observant," returned Dick, almost angrily.

"My business is to be observant," said his fellow-boarder. "No offense. Shall I say more?"

"Go on, sir."



"You have heard of this 'Spotted Six' before."

Dick started.

"I knew it," went on his companion. "Don't want to seem inquisitive, but tell me all about it."

"Why should I?" cried the boy.

"Because I can help you."

"How?"

"You will see. But do as you like."

After a few moments' hesitation, Dick related to him the singular events of the previous day.

"Very interesting," commented Gritman. "You were right to go back and get the paper and envelope. Let me see them."

Again the boy hesitated.

"I don't ask from idle curiosity," his companion said. "But suit yourself."

Dick produced the papers, saying:

"These only seem to deepen the mystery."

"No," said Gritman, as he glanced at the burned sheet; "they make it clear as day."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A STRANGE SUMMONS.

Dick stared at his companion in astonishment.

"You are joking," he said.

"Never joked in my life," replied Gritman.

"But—"

"Wait!" interrupted Gritman. "Leave all to me, and I'll save you."

Dick could not help laughing.

"You'll save me from what?" he said. "I wasn't aware that I was in any danger."

"You are."

"What danger?"

"You will be arrested on the charge of having murdered Mr. Basil Forster."

The boy sprang to his feet.

"But I could prove I had nothing to do with the crime!"

"How? Where were you at the time?"

"Between eleven and twelve last night? I was walking the streets; I was so worried and excited about what had happened that I couldn't sleep, so I tramped about till after twelve."

"Did you meet any one who knew you?" questioned Gritman.

"No."

"Unlucky!"

"Why?"

"Because you can't prove an alibi."

"Me?"

"Now, my boy," and Gritman's tone assumed an unusual earnestness, "I am interested in this case, and I am going to work it up if you will let me."

"You talk as if you were a detective," said Dick.

"I am."

"You, sir?"

"Yes, I. But this must remain our secret."

"Of course."

"I am a detective from love of the profession, and I will say this—that I have never lost a case. But, through all the years I have worked at the calling, I have had one object constantly in view, and that object seems likely to be accomplished soon."

Dick was amazed at this burst of eloquence from his usually taciturn companion, and at the excitement his manner evinced.

"I want you to make me a promise," Gritman went on, quickly.

"What is it?"

"That you will leave this paper, envelope, and card in my possession, and, no matter what happens, say nothing of them to any one."

"But, if I were really accused of murder, sir, they might help clear me," hesitated Dick.

"They will; but in my hands they will be far more powerful than in yours. Do you promise?"

"Yes."

"Good! I know you will keep your word."

"But there is one thing I would like to know."

"What is that?"

"Why you said that this blank sheet of paper made everything as clear as day?"

"I will give you a partial explanation; the burned hole in the middle of the sheet gave me my clew."

"I don't understand."

"I am surprised. It shows, does it not, that Mr. Forster held the sheet over the gas in his office, or over a candle?"

"Yes."

"Why did he do it? Plainly, not to destroy the sheet, for it is still in existence. What was his motive, then?"

"I can't guess."

"Why, it is perfectly simple; it was because the sheet was covered with writing done with what is called sympathetic ink, only visible when heat is applied."

Dick uttered an exclamation of amazement.

Gritman lighted the gas.

"Now watch," he added.

He held the sheet carefully suspended over the flame; in a few moments the writing began to appear upon its surface in clear, black letters.

"Read," said Dick's companion, handing him the sheet.

The boy read the following words:

"BASIL FORSTER:—Discharge the boy, Richard Firman, within an hour after you receive this. Henceforth his destiny will be in our hands. *The Spotted Six Survives!*"

Dick's amazement was too great for words.

"You see, I was right," smiled Gritman. "The letter was written with diluted oil of vitriol, as I supposed."

"What can it all mean?" gasped the boy. "Why, this makes the mystery deeper than ever!"

"On the contrary," said the detective, "it simplifies the matter greatly."

Gritman rose, abruptly.

"Now," he said, "I am going to the scene of the murder, to study the assassin's methods."

"Can't I go with you?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"By no means; that would be an unwise move. I may not return for several hours; but, when I do, I hope to have news for you. By the way"—and the detective paused on the threshold—"did you ever hear the name of Calvert Hathaway?"

"Never."

"You will, in all probability, often hear it in the future. Don't forget it, my boy—Calvert Hathaway."

With this peculiar injunction, Gritman left the room, and a few moments later Dick heard the front door close behind him.

"What did he mean by that?" mused the boy. "Calvert Hathaway! An odd name! Well, I think I have memorized it. I wish he had let me go with him. Well, one thing is certain, I'm not going to stay cooped up in this room till he comes back. I'll go out and tramp for an hour or so."

He put on his hat, ran downstairs, three steps at a time, and left the house.



He rushed toward Broadway, in a state of intense nervous excitement, which no one who has not been placed in a similar position can fully understand.

He had gone scarcely a block, when a ragged little urchin darted out of a doorway, thrust a crumpled bit of paper into his hand, and ran away at the top of his speed.

Before Dick could recover from his astonishment, the youngster had disappeared.

Smoothing out the paper, the boy read the following, written in a neat, feminine hand:

"If you would have the mystery explained, go at once to the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twelfth Street. A carriage is awaiting you there. Enter it without speaking to the driver; it will bear you to the writer of this note, who will explain all."

"Well," gasped Dick, "my head fairly swims! This may be a trick. I won't go! Yes, I will! I can defend myself if worse comes to worse."

Five minutes' walk brought him to the spot mentioned in the note.

At the northeast corner, a coupé was drawn up at the curbstone; a liveried driver was seated upon the box, looking straight ahead, and apparently paying no attention to any one.

"Well," muttered the boy, "if the note wasn't a practical joke, this is the carriage. I'll step in, anyhow, and take my chances of getting fired out."

He was not "fired," however, for the instant he closed the door the driver whipped up his horses, and the vehicle started at a breakneck pace down the avenue.

"This is a swell carriage," mused Dick, "I wonder who it belongs to? Satin linings, silver knobs, and everything else 'way up in G. But I don't see why the owner has it perfumed in such a way; why, the odor is sickening—yet it is rather pleasant, after all. What makes me feel so sleepy? I——"

His head fell back, his eyes closed, and he remained motionless.

When he recovered consciousness, his first sensation was of intense heat.

Where was he?

He did not utter the time-worn query, but it was his first thought.

He was lying upon some hard surface, an intense glare of light shining into his face.

Slowly rising to his feet, the boy looked about him.

It took but a few moments' survey of his surroundings to convince him that he was in the cellar of some large building.

The light which had dazzled his eyes came from an immense furnace, evidently used for heating the house.

It was of unusual size; its door was open, and revealed a bed of living coals.

As Dick put up his hands to shield his face from the heat, he saw a pair of fiery eyes glaring at him from the intense gloom of the other end of the cellar.

An involuntary cry of alarm escaped his lips; at this the owner of the fiery eyes approached him, with a series of leaps, and in a moment stood within a few feet, confronting him.

The boy's heart seemed to stand still with horror.

His companion was an immense orang-outang, as tall as himself.

For a few seconds the hideous creature stood glaring at him; then it uttered a strange cry, sprang forward, seized the boy in its powerful arms, lifted him from the floor, and hurried with him to the furnace door.

As the animal paused, a shriek of horror burst from Dick's lips. The intention of the orang-outang was now plainly evident; it was to fling his helpless victim headlong into the flames.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE AMATEUR TAKES A HAND.

A tall, lean, hatchet-faced man ascended the steps of the late Mr. Basil Forster's mansion, and rang the bell.

The door was almost instantly opened by a servant, who, barring the entrance with his portly body, demanded:

"What is it, sir?"

"I want to go in," was the laconic response.

"Are you sent by the police?"

"Perhaps. Has the superintendent been here?"

"He's inside now."

"Good! Tell him that Enos Gritman is here."

"I'll tell him, but he won't let you in."

And the flunkey slammed the door in the visitor's face.

"That fellow feels his oats a little too much," murmured Gritman.

The door was again opened, and the servant appeared, this time with an altered countenance.

"Come right in, sir, please; the superintendent says——"

"That he is very glad you have come," interrupted a voice that plainly indicated the energetic character of its owner.

The flunkey was unceremoniously thrust aside, and the superintendent stood upon the threshold.

"How are you, my dear Gritman?" he went on, grasping the visitor's hand. "Step in. A shocking crime, this."

"Very."

"If you had come a little sooner, you might have found material for study, but, fortunately, all is as clear as day now."

"Indeed, superintendent?"

"Yes; two of my best men have been at work on the case, and what at first seemed a mystery is now perfectly plain."

"You have found the murderer?"

"We know who he is."

"May I know, too?"

"Yes; he is a boy, a lad of sixteen, named Richard Firman."

If the superintendent expected his companion to manifest any surprise at this announcement, he was disappointed; Gritman's face remained as expressionless as that of a statue, as he said:

"Oh, you think he committed the crime, eh?"

"There cannot be a doubt of it."

"What is the evidence?"

"Well, he was heard yesterday to threaten Mr. Forster, who had just discharged him from his employ. He said: 'You'll be sorry before many hours have passed.'"

"Is that all?" asked Gritman, with a faint smile.

"By no means."

"Well, go on, superintendent."

"An envelope, addressed to the boy, was found lying near Mr. Forster's body. It had, evidently, fallen from the lad's pocket."

"Ah, this is interesting! I saw no mention of that circumstance in the morning papers."

"The envelope was not found until this morning; it was partially concealed by the bedclothes. And there is another fact not mentioned in the papers."

"What is that?"

"The ivory handle of the stiletto bore the monogram, 'R. F.'"

"Indeed? Well, how do you think the lad gained an entrance to Mr. Forster's room?"

"Oh, that is simple enough. The lock of the front door is, as



you see, a very ordinary one. Why, I have a key in my own pocket that will open it."

"So far as that goes, then, it would be just as reasonable to accuse you of the murder as young Firman. But, if I may believe the newspaper reports, the door of Mr. Forster's room was locked on the inside?"

"Yes; but the key was on the floor. The valet, Pierre Valette, insists that he heard it fall from the lock when he burst open the door, but we don't believe that."

"You discredit the valet's evidence, then?"

"Only on that point; we think he was mistaken. At a moment of such excitement, a man's imagination is often very lively."

"Just so. Your theory, then, is——"

"That young Firman found the door of the room unlocked; that, after committing the crime, he put the key on the floor, and locked the door on the outside with another key."

"Humph! That would show some premeditation."

"Of course."

"Well, what about the paper pinned by the stiletto to the dead man's breast, and bearing the words 'The Spotted Six Survives?'"

"A blind, sir; a mere blind."

Gritman chuckled.

"You seem determined to make your theory fit, superintendent."

The official's face flushed.

"Two of the best detectives in this country—Fitzhugh and Reddall—have been studying the case; I don't suppose you would care to put your opinion against theirs?"

"Oh, I should not dare be so presumptuous," replied Gritman, dryly.

"I thought not. I said I was glad you come, because I knew you would admire their clever work."

"Exactly."

"Do you believe the boy innocent?" pursued the superintendent. Without replying, Gritman said:

"I should like to visit the scene of the crime."

"You may do so at once."

And the superintendent began the ascent of the stairs, followed by his companion.

"Has the boy been arrested?" asked Gritman, as they reached the first landing.

"Not yet, but Fitzhugh is after him now. This is the room."

Superintendent Byrnes threw open a door, and the two men entered the presence of the dead.

The body lay exactly as it had been found, except that a sheet had been thrown over it; this the superintendent removed.

Gritman bent over, and examined the corpse intently for some minutes.

The stiletto was still buried in the silent breast, and, transfixed by it, remained the paper with the strange, ominous words:

*"The Spotted Six Survives!"*

While Gritman was reading and re-reading this inscription, Mr. Reddall, one of the detectives at work on the case, entered the room.

"Back, eh?" said the superintendent. "Have you heard from Fitzhugh?"

"He just telephoned me," was the reply. "The boy went out not five minutes before his arrival. He may suspect that we are after him, and have made his escape."

"Fitzhugh will run him down, never fear," was the reply, uttered in a tone of the most perfect confidence. "He won't get out of the city."

"So you're here, are you?" said Reddall to Gritman.

"I'm here," was the brief response, as the amateur arose from his inspection of the inscription.

"A clever blind, that paper," laughed Reddall.

"It is not a blind," said Gritman, quickly.

"Not a blind?"

"That is what I said."

"Well," said Reddall, "I have a good deal of respect for your judgment, Mr. Gritman, and, if the boy did not pin that sheet on his victim's breast as a blind, why, then, did he do it?"

"He did not do it."

"Eh? Who did, then?"

"Ah, that we must find out."

"You don't mean to say you do not believe young Firman guilty?"

"That is precisely what I do mean to say," replied Gritman, quietly.

The superintendent and his inferior laughed long and loud.

"What notion have you got into your head now?" questioned Reddall.

"Several," was the short answer.

"Well, you'd better get them out."

"They could not be knocked out with a sledge-hammer," replied Gritman, with more warmth than he usually showed. "Richard Firman is innocent, and I am going to prove it!"

"Well," said Reddall, with a short laugh, "if Firman did not commit the crime, who did?"

"As I said before," replied Gritman, placidly, "we must find that out."

"Well, go ahead and find it out, if you can."

This was said in a decidedly angry tone, but the amateur replied, calmly:

"Thanks; I will."

The next quarter of an hour he spent in minutely inspecting the room, paying the greatest attention to details which Reddall evidently thought unworthy of notice, for his face wore a sneer as his eyes followed Gritman about the room.

But the superintendent's countenance showed that he felt a serious interest in the amateur's movements, and he finally asked:

"Well, what have you found out?"

"One moment, please. I should like to go upstairs. Will you gentlemen accompany me?"

"I cannot," said the superintendent; "I am due at my office now."

"And I don't care to," added Reddall; "but I will wait here until Mr. Gritman's return, for I am curious to know what his conclusions will be."

At least half an hour elapsed before Enos Gritman returned. When he re-entered the room, he was puffing at a cigar, and his face was as stolid as ever.

"Well," questioned Reddall, sneeringly, "have you completed your investigations?"

"For the present."

"I suppose you have learned some extremely important facts?"

"I have."

"What have you found out?" with another sneer.

"Well, the conclusion I have arrived at is that the assassin was a tall, fashionably-dressed man from New Jersey, and a member of the medical profession. He is a man who has never done any manual labor in his life; he walks with a slight limp, wears gold-mounted eyeglasses, and at the time the murder was committed had on a black derby hat, made in London, and a fawn-colored overcoat. He is thin, pale, and decidedly delicate, and has an affection of the lungs which will carry him off in time, without doubt."



Reddall laughed heartily as his companion paused.

"Of course, your alleged description is only a joke?" he said.

"I never joke on serious subjects—or, in fact, on any subject at all," was the answer. "I have given you a description of the assassin which is correct as far as it goes."

"You are surely not in earnest?"

"I am always in earnest," replied Gritman, who was standing by the window. "And now I perceive," he added, "that the murderer has had a felon on the forefinger of his left hand, which has resulted in a misshapen upper joint."

"Oh, this is going too far," said Reddall, almost angrily. "You are turning this investigation into a farce."

"Think so? You will see!"

And Enos Gritman sauntered out of the room, leaving a cloud of tobacco smoke behind him.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A MYSTERIOUS MAIDEN.

More frequently than is generally believed are great coolness and unusual presence of mind engendered by a position of extreme peril.

When Dick Furman was seized in the huge, muscular arms of the orang-outang, the terror with which he had witnessed the approach of the horrible creature seemed to leave him, and in its place came a quietude that amazed him.

He was powerless in the grasp of the beast, whose evident intention was to hurl him into the furnace.

Acting upon his first impulse, he threw his arms around the neck of the orang-outang, and clasped his hands tightly.

The creature uttered a wild howl of rage, then bent his head and buried his teeth in Dick's shoulder.

Fortunately, the boy wore very thick clothing, and the fangs of the brute did not penetrate his flesh; but, as the jaws of the infuriated animal were pressed tighter, he uttered a cry of pain.

At this moment a clear, flute-like, yet imperative, voice sounded through the cellar:

"Zeko!"

The orang-outang released his hold on Dick's shoulder, and gave a frightened look around.

"Zeko!" repeated the voice.

The brute dropped his intended victim to the cemented floor, uttering a cry unmistakably of fear.

As Dick sprang to his feet, he found himself confronted by a young girl, before whom crouched the orang-outang, in an attitude of abject submission.

The maiden was of about his own age, and it seemed to the boy that he had never seen so lovely a creature.

For a few moments, forgetful of his surroundings, Dick stood gazing into her eyes.

Then his glance wandered to the hideous creature at her feet, and he shuddered.

"You need have no fear," said the girl. "Zeko will not harm you now; he obeys me in everything. Come, Zeko!"

The orang-outang submissively followed her to the other end of the cellar, where, as Dick now perceived for the first time, stood a cage about six feet square, with heavy iron bars.

"Go in, Zeko!" commanded the maiden.

The creature slunk into the cage, and the girl closed the door.

Involuntarily, Dick uttered a sigh of deep relief.

"The control you have over the brute is wonderful," he said.

"I did not suppose an orang-outang could be so completely tamed."

"I saved his life once," replied the girl, "and he will never forget it."

"You have saved mine now," cried Dick, impulsively, "and be sure I shall never forget it!"

"You are not out of danger yet," said the maiden, her beautiful face very grave. "The immediate peril is past, but others threaten you. I heard them tell Zeko to throw you into the furnace, and I resolved to save you, but——"

"You don't mean to say," interrupted Dick, with an incredulous smile, "that that brute can understand what is said to him?"

"Certainly I do," was the reply. "You do not think it strange that your dog obeys your commands; why, then, do you consider it wonderful that Zeko, who is of a higher species—in fact, almost human—comprehends what is said to him? But," the girl added, abruptly, "we must waste no more time. If I promise to do all I can to save your life—which, I must tell you, is in great peril—will you follow my directions implicitly?"

"Of course I will, Miss——"

"You may call me Irma."

"Then, Miss Irma, I promise to follow your directions to the letter."

"Then you must let me blindfold you."

"Why?"

"Ask no questions! I cannot answer them."

"I'll try not to, then, Irma. But, after I am blindfolded, what then?"

"I will lead you to a place of temporary safety."

"Why not take me out of the house at once?"

"Because it is at present watched; later I will do so. But I must warn you that you will find the outside world only a place of temporary safety. You must be constantly vigilant, for they are on your track."

"Who?" demanded the boy.

"Ah," replied Irma, in some agitation, "that question I cannot answer; perhaps I have said too much already. Come; we must not waste time; let me tie this around your head."

She had produced a large, white silk handkerchief, with which she now proceeded to blindfold her companion.

"Come where I lead you," she said, in a low tone; "but, remember, not a word, not a sound!"

Irma led her companion along a passageway, up a flight of stone steps, then through a thickly carpeted hall, and finally—as the boy guessed—into a room.

Then she released his hand, and Dick heard her softly close a door.

"Now," she said, in a low tone, "you may remove the bandage."

The boy tore the handkerchief from his eyes, and gazed wonderingly about him.

He found himself in a room about twenty feet square, plainly yet handsomely furnished.

What particularly attracted his attention was a series of six oil paintings upon the walls, the subjects of all being similar, and in rather peculiar taste from an artistic standpoint.

Each of them represented the administration of a hypodermic injection; a man with his left arm bared, and another—presumably a physician—in the act of performing the operation.

The faces of the patients were all different, but that of the doctor was the same in every case.

At the farther end of the room was a large portrait of a fine-looking, middle-aged man—the physician again.

All these, and other details, Dick took in at a glance, but his attention quickly returned to his pretty companion.

"You may speak now," she said, as she met his questioning glance, "but be very careful."



"What place is this?" asked the boy, in a whisper.

"The one question of all others that I cannot answer," was the reply.

"At least, you can tell me what these strange pictures mean?"

For the first time in their brief acquaintance, Irma smiled, revealing a set of small, even, pearly teeth.

"You seem to have a talent for asking indiscreet questions," she said. "I cannot answer that one, either."

"Perhaps you can inform me who that gentleman is?" said Dick, pointing to the portrait; "he has a striking face."

The girl hesitated a moment, then replied:

"I do not suppose there can be any harm in that; his name was Calvert Hathaway."

Dick started.

"Calvert Hathaway!" he murmured. "Where have I heard that name?"

"It is not likely that you ever heard it," said Irma. "And now, good-by; I dare not remain longer. You will be conducted from the house as soon as it is safe for you to go."

"But when shall I see you again, Irma?" cried Dick, as he seized his companion's arm.

"Never!" almost sobbed the girl, quickly releasing herself from his grasp and rushing from the room.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A STRANGE ESCAPE.

Acting upon his first impulse, Dick started to follow her, but the door was closed in his face; and, when he attempted to open it, he found that it was locked.

"Can this be a trick?" he exclaimed, in a startled whisper; but the next moment he dismissed the thought as unworthy.

Surely, Irma had shown the strongest desire to save him from his mysterious captors; perhaps she had imperiled her own life by what she had done. Dick felt that he had no just reason to doubt her.

"I will wait patiently," he murmured; "I know she will do what she can for me. But am I never to see her again?"

This query raised a train of melancholy thoughts; and for a time, it is safe to say, he was less concerned about the dangers that surrounded him than at the reflection that he might never again meet the bewitching maiden who had taken so strong a hold on his fancy.

Who was she? This question agitated him more than the mystery of his whereabouts.

"I will find her somehow," he murmured. "We have not parted forever—I feel, I know it! And now let me see if I can't manage to get some idea of where I am."

He arose from the chair into which he had sunk, and began a careful inspection of the room.

It contained no windows, and but one door—that by which he and Irma had entered, and through which the girl had disappeared.

Half a dozen chairs, a heavy oak table and a cabinet containing a few pieces of bric-a-brac, were the only articles of furniture in the apartment.

"There's no clew, so far," reflected the boy; "let me see if this queer lot of pictures won't furnish me with one."

And he began studying the paintings.

Somewhat, they possessed a strange fascination to him; their peculiar subject and the art with which they were executed, and which Dick was able to appreciate, gave them an absorbing interest.

The face of Calvert Hathaway particularly attracted the boy,

and he stood before the portrait a long time, memorizing every feature.

Presently, he observed, painted in one corner of the picture, in small, dark-red letters, a brief inscription, which he was not able to decipher until he approached very near to the canvas, and which would not have been noticed by a careless observer.

It consisted of but two words—"Our Preserver."

"Our Preserver!" muttered Dick. "Now, what can those words mean? 'Our Preserver!' Perhaps 'our' refers to the six men in the other pictures. But, from what did Calvert Hathaway preserve them? What sort of an operation is he performing in those pictures? How did Mr. Gritman ever hear of him? This whole thing seems like a dream! But it isn't one. What will the end be?"

The boy sunk into a chair, and for a long time sat buried in meditation.

At last he awoke from his reverie with a start. He consulted his watch and found he had been a prisoner in the room nearly two hours.

"I can't stand this much longer," he exclaimed, aloud, springing to his feet and excitedly pacing the room. "Where is Irma? Why doesn't she come to me? She must, she shall!"

He came to a standstill and closed his eyes.

For a few moments he remained motionless, an expression upon his face plainly indicating concentrated thought.

Then burst from his lips the words:

"She is coming! I knew she would!"

The next moment the door was thrown open, and Irma entered. Her beautiful face was very pale.

"I could remain away no longer," she said, in a low, frightened tone. "I felt as if you were summoning me."

"I did summon you," replied Dick.

"How?"

"By a power I possess which you cannot disobey, Irma."

For a few moments they stood gazing into each other's eyes in silence.

Then Irma said:

"We seem bound by some strange tie. When I left you I told you we should never meet again, yet you have called me to your side."

"Yes, Irma."

"I saved your life."

"Yes; and I am more than anxious to prove my gratitude."

"Yet you might have sacrificed mine."

"I do not understand."

"Had you summoned me five minutes sooner we would both have been lost, for they were here."

"Who?"

"I cannot answer that question. But I must again tell you, Mr. Firman—"

"Dick!"

"Dick, then—that your life will henceforth be in constant danger. And the next time it is threatened, Dick, I fear I shall not be near to save you."

"Oh, Irma," cried the boy, impulsively, "explain this mystery. Who are these unknown enemies of mine? Why are they pursuing me? I never knowingly wronged any one in my life."

"I cannot answer your questions; my lips are sealed. But we are wasting time; the hour for your escape has come, Dick. Good-by!"

Dick seized her hand.

"One moment!" he cried. "When am I to go?"

"At once. An old woman will come to you. Do exactly what



she bids you, or you will never leave this place alive; obey her and you will be safe."

And the girl tore her hand from his detaining grasp and ran toward the door.

"Have you not one parting word for me?" cried the boy, almost imploringly.

"Yes. Remember this: *'The Spotted Six Survives!'*"

With these strange words the girl gently but swiftly closed the door behind her.

For a few moments Dick stood almost stupefied.

What did it all mean?

Irma had uttered the same mysterious phrase that had been written upon the card received by Mr. Forster and upon the slip of paper pinned to the dead man's breast.

Before he could recover from his amazement the door again opened and an old woman, dressed in a black robe, noiselessly entered.

Her wrinkled and seared face indicated unusual strength of character, as did the deep voice in which she said:

"Are you ready to obey me implicitly? If not, your last hope is gone."

"I will obey you," replied the boy. "What do you want me to do?"

"First let me blindfold you."

"Very well."

In a few moments a silk handkerchief—the same Dick thought that Irma had used—was bound tightly around his head.

"Now let me lead you."

Guided by the old woman, Dick left the room, walked through a long passageway, and at last emerged into the open air.

Then, still guided by the mysterious woman, he treaded a graveled path until his companion's voice said:

"You are now about to enter a carriage. Put up your right foot."

The boy obeyed; his foot was placed on the carriage step; a moment later he was reclining on a cushioned seat.

"Do not remove the bandage," said the old woman's voice, "until you have ridden at least five minutes."

The carriage door closed; the next moment the vehicle started.

"Well, this is the queerest thing that ever happened to me!" murmured Dick. "It seems like a chapter from a romance. Am I safe yet, I wonder? And shall I ever see Irma again?"

This thought aroused a long train of others, and for several minutes the boy sat motionless, with bowed head.

Suddenly he became aware that a peculiar odor was permeating the atmosphere of the carriage.

"It's the same that made me unconscious before," he cried aloud; "but it shall not now!"

He lifted his hand to tear the bandage from his eyes, but before he could accomplish his purpose his arm fell limp and lifeless to his side, and he fell back, again a victim to the same stupor that had overpowered him earlier in the day.

When he recovered his senses he found that the handkerchief had been removed from his eyes.

He was seated in the same carriage in which he had been conveyed to the mysterious house; it was now at a standstill, and—as Dick perceived by glancing out of the window—at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twelfth Street.

He threw open the door and sprang from the vehicle.

The next instant the carriage started up the avenue at a rapid rate.

The driver looked back.

What was there so familiar in his face? Dick asked himself.

In another moment it flashed upon him that the occupant of the box was no other than Irma, disguised as a boy.

He started to follow the vehicle, but the next instant, faint and dizzy, he fell to the pavement; when he had struggled to his feet the carriage had disappeared.

"I'll go home and tell Mr. Gritman the whole story," he murmured. "He may be able to solve the mystery and find Irma."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TRIAL AND ITS ENDING.

But just at this moment, a voice behind him said:

"So here you are!"

The boy wheeled around, and confronted Enos Gritman.

"Come with me," said the detective, in his usual quiet, collected manner.

Linking his arm in Dick's, he walked away.

"How did you find me?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I have eyes in my head," replied Gritman, "and I know how to use them."

"But what is the matter?"

For Dick had turned, and was staring with wide-open, startled eyes at a carriage that had just passed, and from the window of which only a few seconds before a girl's face had looked.

"It was—it was she!" gasped Dick.

"Who?" demanded Gritman.

"Irma!"

"Who is Irma?"

"The girl who saved my life to-day. But I forgot; you don't know about that."

"Tell me as quickly as you can; this may be of the greatest importance."

Dick hurriedly related the strange adventures of the day.

When he had finished, Gritman said, with more emotion than the boy had ever seen him show:

"Oh, if I had only known this a few minutes sooner!"

"What would you have done?"

"No matter. Oh, why did I not suspect the girl's identity?"

"You know her?" cried Dick.

"So they have a place here as well as in New Jersey?" went on Gritman, as if to himself.

"What are you talking about?" asked the boy.

"Never mind now; here comes Fitzhugh, a detective, and he evidently suspects or knows your identity. No resistance, remember."

The detective, a big, burly man, came rushing up. Clapping his hand on Dick's shoulder, he shouted:

"Richard Firman, you are my prisoner!"

Gritman smiled rather sarcastically.

"Very well done, Fitzhugh!" he said. "Quite melodramatic, upon my word."

The detective reddened.

"Your comments are in bad taste," he said, with an almost venomous glance.

"Very likely," returned Gritman, quietly.

"Now, then, young man," said Fitzhugh, assuming his professional demeanor, "are you ready to go with me?"

"I am ready," replied Dick.

"I shall visit you before many hours have passed, Dick," said Gritman, lighting a fresh cigar and strolling away in the opposite direction to that in which Fitzhugh marched his prisoner.

In less than half an hour Dick Firman was behind the bars.

The next morning Gritman visited Dick, and found him greatly depressed.



"Don't give up the ship," said the amateur, cheerfully. "Keep up your spirits, my boy!"

"How can I?" said Dick, despairingly. "Why, they all believe me guilty."

"Yes," said Gritman. "Evidence is against you, and you will probably be condemned by judge and jury—unless I can find new evidence."

"Do you expect to?"

"I am certain I shall; but it may not be in time to prevent your conviction and sentence."

"Then——"

"Wait! You will not suffer, whatever punishment may be meted out to you."

"You—you mean that? You are sure?"

"I mean it—I am sure."

"Are you willing to confide in me?"

"Implicitly."

"I will put you to the test at once."

"Do so."

"I want you to give me a history of your life."

Dick laughed faintly.

"That won't take long," he said.

"So much the better; I don't like long stories. Go ahead."

"Well, I was born in this city about sixteen years ago. My father was lost at sea when I was only a few months old; my mother lived but five years longer. When she died I went to live with my aunt—my mother's sister—in Brooklyn. She gave me my education. On her death last year I found it necessary to go to work. I knew that Mr. Basil Forster had been an old friend of my father's, so I went to him and asked him for employment. He gave it to me, and—and you know the rest. That's the whole story, Mr. Gritman."

"Very concisely told," said the detective, approvingly; "and it coincides exactly with what I had previously learned. Well, Dick, I must leave you now, for I have work ahead of me."

"But, Mr. Gritman——"

"I can't stop any longer," interrupted the detective, brusquely. "I am going now. No matter what you hear, remember I am going to save you."

And Enos Gritman walked abruptly and rapidly away, puffing at a cigar that he had just lighted.

The courtroom was crowded to suffocation at Dick's trial; the case had excited much interest, and public opinion was against the prisoner.

Dick's previous good character, the lack of sufficient motive for the crime, the improbability that a boy of the prisoner's age could plan and execute so daring a scheme—these points were strongly dwelt upon by the defense.

But, on the other hand, the facts that Dick could not prove an alibi, that he had had a quarrel with his employer only a few hours before the murder, and had uttered threats, that an envelope addressed to him had been found beside the dead man's body, and that the stiletto with which the fatal blow was struck was marked with the initials "R. F." told terribly against the boy.

When the evidence was all in things looked very dark for the prisoner.

The judge's charge to the jury seemed fair and impartial. He pointed out to them that the evidence from beginning to end was purely circumstantial, that in some minds there might still be room for doubt that Richard Firman had murdered Basil Forster.

But in the charge there was, after all, an undertone of certainty of the prisoner's guilt that could not fail to deepen the already strong prejudices of the jury.

Just fifteen minutes after the jury left the room they returned. In reply to the question, "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" the foreman replied, in a somewhat tremulous voice:

"We have."

"What is it?"

"Murder in the first degree!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Two days later the never-satiated metropolis had a fresh sensation.

Richard Firman, the condemned murderer, had been found lying dead in his cell, and, pinned to his breast was a slip of paper bearing the words:

*"The Spotted Six Survives!"*

## CHAPTER IX.

### A MYSTERIOUS PRISONER.

The climax of public interest and excitement was reached when Dick Firman's sudden and mysterious death was announced.

What was the cause of his decease?

Who had pinned to his breast the bit of paper bearing the strange words: "The Spotted Six Survives?"

The first theory advanced was that he had taken poison, having first fastened the paper to his coat.

But at the coroner's inquest it was decided that he had died from heart disease.

An autopsy was suggested, but this was prevented by the efforts of Dick's friend, Enos Gritman, who had been the last person to see the boy alive.

Mr. Gritman's influence prevailed, and the body was interred without mutilation at the hands of the doctors.

But the strange inscription, "The Spotted Six Survives"—the same that had been pinned by a stiletto to the body of Mr. Forster—still remained an unsolved mystery.

Enos Gritman and Reddall, the detective, met on the day of Dick's burial.

"Well," said the latter, clapping Gritman familiarly on the shoulder, "I suppose you are willing now to acknowledge that I was right?"

"Upon what point?" inquired Gritman.

"Why, in the Forster murder case."

"I am not."

"You don't mean that you still think Firman innocent?"

"I do."

"You only say so."

"I mean so."

"Do you believe he committed suicide?"

"No."

"Humph! If it had not been for you an autopsy would have been made, and the poison that the boy took would have been found in his stomach."

Gritman only shrugged his shoulders.

"He did take poison," persisted Reddall. "I know something about toxicology, and I venture to say I can tell you just the stuff that caused his death."

"Can you?"

"Yes; it was digitalis."

"You are wrong."

"Ah," cried Reddall, triumphantly, "I have trapped you! You know what poison it was. Gritman, I will be frank with you; I believe you furnished Firman with the poison he took."

"You are wrong," replied Gritman, quietly.



"I am not. You were the last person with him; he died only a few minutes after you left. I shan't give you away, don't worry."

"I am not worrying; I have nothing to worry about," said Gritman. "Reddall," he added, earnestly, "you are entirely mistaken in your surmises. I give you my word of honor that I furnished Firman with no poison, and further, that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, he did not die from poisoning. Do you credit the statement?"

"Since you pledge your honor on it," was the prompt reply, "I do. I have been wrong, so far as you were concerned, but I still adhere to my belief that Richard Firman committed suicide by poison to avoid suffering the extreme penalty of the law."

"I differ from you."

"Very well; some day I may prove the truth of my theory."

"How can you?"

Reddall wagged his head mysteriously.

"You will see. Richard Firman is dead, but public interest in the case is still alive, and will be for some time to come."

And the detective walked away.

Gritman smiled in a rather peculiar manner as he watched his retreating form.

"Yes," he murmured, "Richard Firman is dead, but Calvert Hathaway still lives."

\* \* \* \* \*

On the afternoon of the day following that upon which the conversation we have just recorded took place a prisoner was seated in a cell in the prison at Sing Sing, his elbows resting on his knees and his head on the palms of his hands.

He was a rather handsome young fellow of about twenty, though his features bore evident marks of dissipation.

He was serving a term of six years for burglary in the second degree, and his name, as recorded in the prison books, was Henry Earl.

As he sat buried in meditation, he became conscious of approaching footsteps.

With a start he aroused himself from his reverie and waited; he seemed to instinctively feel that the destination of those footsteps was his cell.

In a few moments two men appeared before the grated door.

One was a prison official, the other a visitor.

The latter was a tall, thin, rather carelessly dressed, middle-aged man.

"Some one to see you, Earl," said the keeper, gruffly.

"Mr. Gritman!" exclaimed the prisoner, evidently somewhat agitated.

"Yes, it is I."

"Would you like to go into the cell, Mr. Gritman?" asked the keeper, very politely.

"If you please."

The door was unlocked and the detective entered, while the keeper walked away.

"Why are you here?" asked Earl, in a shaking voice.

"Simply to see how you are getting along," was the reply.

"Have you no news for me?"

"None."

"My mother—does she know?"

"I have no reason to think she does. I can assure you that I have kept your secret."

The prisoner breathed a long sigh of relief.

"She must never know," he said.

"She will not know from me, Earl," replied Gritman, "unless you force me to tell her."

"What do you mean? How could I ever do that?"

"By neglecting to follow my directions implicitly, by allowing yourself to think of escape."

The young man started.

"Escape!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; you already have a plan. Do you think I do not understand your agitated, excited manner—do you suppose I cannot read your mind? Be careful what you do, Henry Earl. You must serve your term here; if you leave this prison before that time has expired you will rush out to destruction."

"How could I leave it, watched day and night as I am?"

There was a look of cunning on the prisoner's face as he put this question that did not escape Gritman.

"You have a plan," said the detective, sternly. "You are contemplating an escape, and there are others with you."

Earl's face reddened, then turned very pale.

"Are you a fiend?" he cried, "or a——"

"I am neither a fiend nor anything else, except a man with cultivated powers of observation," replied Gritman. "It would not be difficult for any physiognomist to read your face. Your scheme to escape may succeed, but it will be an unlucky thing for you if it does."

"I have no scheme," declared the prisoner. "I am content to remain here until I have served my sentence."

"I wish, for your own sake, that you were telling the truth," said the detective, "but I know you are not. But keep your own counsel—only remember what I have said."

"I shall not forget."

"I hope for many reasons that you will not. And now good-by."

"Wait one moment!" cried Earl, with more emotion than he had yet shown. "My mother——"

"Well?"

"She believes——"

"That you are traveling."

"What does she—what can she—think?"

"Whatever she may think she has made no attempt, so far as I am aware, to get at the root of the matter."

"Thank God!"

"And now, Earl, I must leave you."

And Gritman turned abruptly on his heel and walked down the corridor; while the keeper, who had been standing near, relocked the cell door.

In a few moments the official overtook Gritman, and said:

"Earl is one of the best prisoners we have; there's never any trouble with him."

"I hope there never will be," returned the detective, shortly.

"I am sure there will not."

"Never be sure of anything; at this moment Henry Earl is meditating escape."

And Gritman looked the jailer steadily in the eye.

"D—do you think so?" the fellow gasped.

"I said so," was the brief reply.

"But——"

"Oh, if you don't agree with me, all right; only keep an eye on him."

When they had parted Gritman again communed with himself, as was often his wont.

"The jailer is a fellow-conspirator of Earl's," he mused; "I suspected it. I must consult his superiors."

Within a few minutes Enos Gritman had made known to certain high authorities in the prison his suspicion that Earl and other prisoners were plotting to escape.



## CHAPTER X.

CALVERT HATHAWAY.

"The young gentleman has arrived, sir."

Mr. Volney Annison sprang to his feet in considerable excitement.

"I did not hear him enter, and I have been listening for him. Show him to this room at once."

"Yes, sir."

And the servant withdrew with a low bow.

Few of the friends of Mr. Annison, the usually calm, dignified banker, had ever seen him as agitated as he now was.

His cheeks were flushed, he paced the floor of his library with quick, nervous steps.

The door opened and the liveried servant announced:

"Mr. Calvert Hathaway."

At the same moment a handsomely-dressed young man briskly entered the room.

He was apparently about twenty years of age, his hair was black and curling, a small dark mustache adorned his upper lip.

"My dear boy!" cried Mr. Annison, rushing forward with both hands extended, "how delighted I am to see you!"

"And I to meet you, Mr. Annison," replied the newcomer, with an air of perfect self-possession. "But your name has long been familiar to me."

"And yours to me; in fact, it was a familiar one long before you were born, for it is the same that was borne by your father."

"Yes, sir."

"It is for his sake that we welcome you most cordially to New York; but I know we shall like you for your own."

"I hope so, sir."

"You are a friend of our cause, of course, and willing to become a worker?"

"You need not ask that, Mr. Annison."

"No, I am sure of it. By the way, I have neglected one of our formalities; I have not asked you the password."

"*The Spotted Six Survives*," said the youth, fixing his dark eyes on Mr. Annison's.

"Correct. And the grip?"

"Is this it?"

And the newcomer took his companion's hand in his own and gave it a peculiar pressure.

"That is correct, also. Well, my boy, we shall all do what we can to make your stay in New York an agreeable one, but there may be some work for you to do."

"You will find me ready."

"While you remain in New York you will be my guest, of course, and that of our league?"

"I shall be delighted, Mr. Annison."

"Now you must allow me to present you to my daughter. I have told her to come when I ring this bell."

As he spoke, he touched a bell upon the table.

"I have doubts about my daughter," added Mr. Annison, in a low tone. "I fear she has been guilty of treachery to us."

"Is it possible?"

"I may be wrong, but I fear it. You have, of course, been informed of the case of the boy, Richard Firman?"

"Oh, yes."

"He was taken to our place on the other side of the North River, but he made his escape in a most mysterious manner; and I have suspicions that my daughter was concerned in the affair."

"This is serious, sir."

"It is, indeed. I want you, after you become acquainted with

her, to gain her confidence and try to sound her as to her feelings toward our league. We will have a long talk about this later on."

"Very well, sir," replied Hathaway. "By the bye," he added, "that case of young Firman's was a very mysterious one."

"It was, indeed," said Annison, with lowered brows. "Of course you know he was innocent?"

"Yes; you managed that affair splendidly. But his death?"

"Ah, that is what puzzles us."

"You had nothing to do with it?"

"Nothing whatever."

"But the paper with the words, 'The Spotted Six Survives,' that was found pinned to his coat?"

"Was not placed there by one of us. That is a thing that alarms us a good deal. But hush! my daughter is coming."

The door opened and a beautiful girl entered the room.

"Irma, my dear, this is Mr. Calvert Hathaway, whom we have been expecting so long," smiled Mr. Annison.

As the eyes of the two young people met the girl started violently, and Hathaway evinced no little embarrassment.

Mr. Annison gazed at them suspiciously.

"It is not possible," he said, "that you have ever met before?"

"How could that be," said Hathaway, "when I have but just arrived in the city?"

"At first," added the young lady, "I thought I had seen Mr. Hathaway before, but I must have been mistaken."

"Of course you were," said her father, his momentary suspicions evidently removed, "for he has only been in New York an hour or so. Well," he added, "I want you two to be friends, and I have no doubt you will be. You have one interest in common, one tie that binds you as nothing else could. You understand me?"

Irma bowed her head in silence, but Hathaway replied in a clear, manly voice:

"I understand you, sir; and I assure you that Miss Irma will always find a true and steadfast friend in me."

Mr. Annison touched the bell at his elbow, and the servant who had ushered the young man into the room entered.

"Conduct Mr. Hathaway to his apartment," directed the banker.

When the visitor had left the room Mr. Annison turned to his daughter.

"Well, what do you think of the young man?" he asked, abruptly.

The girl seemed much embarrassed.

"How—how can I tell, father?" she stammered. "How is it possible for me to have formed an opinion in such a short time?"

"I do not ask for an opinion," was the response; "I only want to know your impression. Is it favorable or otherwise?"

"It is certainly favorable."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Why, father?"

"Because I have formed certain plans regarding you and young Hathaway. He is the son of our preserver, you are my daughter; could there be a more fitting union?"

"Father!"

And the girl averted her head.

"I will add no more at present, but remember what I have said. From his appearance I judge that he is all I anticipated, a worthy son of his father. Do not forget, my child."

"I shall not forget."

And the girl hurried from the room.

Outside the door she pressed her hands upon her temples.

"Am I dreaming, or am I mad?" she murmured. "It cannot be—yet it must be! How can I be mistaken?—yet how can I be



right? If I am, Heaven help him! Oh, I must see him and warn him!"

As Calvert Hathaway was descending the stairs, just before the dinner hour, Irma met him.

"I must speak with you," she said, breathlessly.

"I am at your service," replied the young man, with the utmost politeness, but without the slightest evidence of emotion.

"It is my duty to warn you to leave this house at once," whispered the girl. "You are in the greatest danger here."

"What danger can menace Calvert Hathaway in the house of his father's oldest friend?" asked the visitor, with every appearance of surprise.

"None; but you are not Calvert Hathaway!"

"Indeed? then who am I?"

"I dare not utter your name in this house!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN DEEP WATERS.

In response to Irma Annison's impassioned words Calvert Hathaway only raised his eyebrows with the air of an experienced man of the world; and, without the slightest evidence of emotion, said:

"You seem to have very peculiar suspicions regarding me, Miss Annison."

"They are not suspicions, they are certainties," cried the girl.

"Indeed?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Irma, almost tearfully, "why are you so unresponsive? Why will you not speak freely to me? have I not shown myself your true friend?"

"You forget that we met for the first time only an hour ago," was the cold reply.

"You deny having known me before?" the girl exclaimed. "Very well, I have nothing more to say."

And she turned sadly away.

But the young man seized her hand, and it was with a changed voice and manner that he said:

"Miss Annison—Irma—do not go like that! I—I cannot bear it. You have said that you were my friend, and I believe it; do you not believe that I am yours?"

"I hope so," was the low answer, as the girl lifted her eyes to those of her companion. "I hope so, but how can I tell?"

"Can you not read truth in my eyes?"

"I thought I could, but you are here under false colors."

"That is a mere surmise of yours."

"It is no surmise, it is an absolute certainty. You are strangely changed, and others might be deceived, but I—oh, I could not be!"

"You must not mention these strange suspicions of yours to any one," said Hathaway.

"I shall not."

"Hush! your father is coming!"

The three went in to dinner.

At the conclusion of the meal Irma rose abruptly, excused herself and left the room, and Mr. Annison and his guest were alone.

"Well," asked the banker, fixing his eyes keenly on those of the young man, "what do you think of her?"

"She is a charming girl," was the ready reply—indeed, Hathaway could have said no less.

"And she is a good girl. But, as I told you, I fear she has played us false, and I must know. You will help me?"

"How can I?"

"Gain her confidence; that will not be a difficult task. She likes you—I can see that, and in time she will confide in you."

"As I told you, I think she assisted in Richard Firman's escape. There is other evidence, too, but to acquaint you with it it would be necessary to give you a history of the whole case, which might prove tedious to you."

"On the contrary, it would interest me greatly, Mr. Annison."

For a few moments the banker sat with downcast eyes, evidently meditating deeply.

At last he said:

"Well, I will tell you in a few words. When the boy's turn came there were many willing to remove him, and several plans were suggested. Two were tried, and they conflicted a little with each other. As he was an employee of Jerome Walker's, it was thought that a scheme might be devised for revenging ourselves on both at the same time."

"Wait a moment!" interrupted Hathaway. "Have you not made a mistake. Jerome Walker? The employer of Richard Firman was named Basil Forster, I thought."

"Oh, yes, that is the name under which he succeeded in hiding his identity for years," replied Mr. Annison, "but we discovered the deception at last. It was planned that it should be made to appear that Firman killed him. But if this succeeded the boy's innocence might have been proven, so he was cleverly lured to the place in New Jersey, which he would never have left alive had it not been for the interference of some person unknown—unknown, but not unsuspected; for, as I have told you, I believe that person to have been my daughter."

"And who really killed Basil Forster?" asked young Hathaway, his eyes squarely meeting those of his companion.

"That question I cannot answer," was the reply, "for though you are heart and soul, as well as by inheritance, one of us, you have not yet submitted to the ordeal of initiation. In time you will know all."

"I did not ask merely from idle curiosity, Mr. Annison."

"Oh, I am sure of that. And now you agree to watch my daughter, to seek by every means in your power to learn the truth in the matter of which we have spoken?"

"I do, sir."

"Very good. And now let us change the subject for a pleasanter one: How long is it since you have heard from your mother?"

This question seemed to embarrass the self-possessed young man in an unaccountable manner.

"Not—not very lately, sir," he stammered, his face reddening.

"No, I imagine not," added the banker, with a peculiar smile.

"I—er—what do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that I have been in correspondence with your mother for some time, and that she has informed me of your negligence in writing to her."

"I acknowledge it, sir; I shall do better in the future."

"You need not be so particular after this, my boy; you will see you mother very soon."

"Sir!"

"I mean it. She may even now be in New York."

There was a startling change in the expression of the young man's face, but Mr. Annison did not notice it, for just at this instant a servant entered the dining-room, saying:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Annison; but there is a young man in the reception-room who wants to see you. He seems excited, sir, and says it is important business that brings him here."

"His name?"

"He would not give it, sir."



"Bah! he is some beggar. Send him away, Austin, and don't let me hear anything more about him."

The servant bowed and left the room, and Mr. Annison again turned to his guest.

But again the door opened and Austin entered.

"What now?" demanded the banker, sharply. "Cannot Mr. Hathaway and I be left in peace a few minutes?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but the young man won't go."

"Won't go? Then eject him from the house."

And Mr. Annison rose to his feet in a white heat of rage.

"But, sir——"

"Go, I say, and do my bidding."

"But he has given me his name, Mr. Annison."

"What is it?"

Austin produced a sealed envelope.

"He would not give me a card, sir; but he wrote a few words on a slip of paper and put it in this envelope."

"Well, well, give it to me."

The servant handed his employer the envelope, which Mr. Annison, still flushed with anger, tore open.

But as he ran his eyes over the contents of the paper the expression of his face underwent a rapid and startling change.

"What does this mean?" he gasped, sinking back into his chair.

Austin manifested a respectful silence, but Hathaway said:

"Nothing wrong, I hope, sir?"

"There certainly is something wrong," replied Mr. Annison. "Read this."

Hathaway took the paper, and read these words:

"My name is Calvert Hathaway. *The Spotted Six Survives.*"

## CHAPTER XII.

### CALVERT HATHAWAY NO. 2.

With suppressed excitement, indicated by his compressed lips and blazing eyes, Mr. Annison watched the youth as he read the curious message.

He noted that Hathaway's hand trembled and that his face turned pale.

"Well?" he said at last.

"Well?" repeated the young man, meeting his eye without flinching.

"What do you make of this?"

"How do I know what to make of it? It must be a joke."

"It is no joke; no one would dare jest on such a subject."

"Can there be two Calvert Hathaways?"

"There is but one."

"Well?"

"Either you or this newcomer is an impostor."

Hathaway leaped to his feet.

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"Be quiet, young man; this subject is too serious to waste words upon. Do you dare go with me and confront this stranger who claims to be Calvert Hathaway, and who is acquainted with our password?"

"Of course I do."

"Then come."

The young man followed his host from the dining-room; a few moments later they entered the apartment where the visitor was seated.

He was a rather handsome young man of not more than twenty. He was attired in a shabby, ill-fitting suit of clothes; and his eyes wore a look not unlike those of a hunted animal

as for a few moments he gazed from the face of one of his companions to that of the other.

At last, approaching the banker with extended hand, he began:

"Mr. Annison, I——"

But the old gentleman drew back, saying:

"You claim to be Calvert Hathaway?"

The young man started.

"Claim to be!" he cried. "I am Calvert Hathaway; surely you do not doubt it!"

"I have the gravest doubts."

"You amaze me! Certainly the fact that I am in possession of the password ought to be enough to decide the question of my identity."

"It is not enough. There is another Calvert Hathaway in the field."

"He is a liar, an impostor!" exclaimed the young man, excitedly. "Where is the scoundrel? I must see him."

"He stands there," replied Mr. Annison, pointing to Calvert Hathaway No. 1.

The newcomer sprang toward him with fiery eyes and clinched fists, but the banker interposed himself between the two young men.

"Wait," he said. "Justice shall be done and the impostor, whichever of you it may prove to be, punished."

"If you are Calvert Hathaway"—turning to the newcomer—"why have you not presented yourself before?"

The flush upon the face of the youth faded, and he faltered:

"I—I have been traveling."

His embarrassment did not escape the sharp eyes of Mr. Annison.

"Your costume is certainly not that of a well-to-do young man traveling for pleasure."

"I have been unfortunate lately."

"Unfortunate in what way?"

"I cannot explain."

"Humph! it is evident that you are an impostor.

you will have an opportunity to prove your identity if you avail yourself of it."

"What opportunity?" cried the young man, with seeming eagerness.

"Mrs. Hathaway, the widow of Dr. Calvert Hathaway, will be in New York in a few days, perhaps in a few hours."

"My mother in New York?" gasped the visitor.

"I said Mrs. Hathaway. Will you dare meet her, face to face, and assert your claim to be her son?"

"Yes," promptly replied the young man, in a clear, ringing voice.

"When do you expect Mrs. Hathaway?"

"As I said, she may be here in a few hours, but I hardly expect her before the day after to-morrow."

"I will call on the evening of that day."

"Do so if you wish—if you dare."

"I shall be here, and then this wretch who has dared assume my name will settle his indebtedness with me."

And without another word the excited youth rushed from the room and from the house.

Mr. Annison stepped quickly into the hallway.

"Austin!" he cried.

The servant followed with almost startling promptness.

"Follow that man," ordered the banker. "You understand?"

"I understand, sir."

And Austin put on a heavy overcoat which hung upon the rack in the hall, donned a slouch hat and left the house.



"He is one of us," explained Mr. Annison; "and he is ready for such a task at a moment's notice. Well, my boy"—as he led the way to the library—"this is a most unpleasant business."

"It is, indeed, sir; and it places me in a very disagreeable position."

"Yes. I will frankly tell you that I like you, that all my prejudices are in your favor, and that I believe this fellow who has dared to assume the name of Calvert Hathaway is an impostor and an enemy."

"I thank you, sir."

"But come, my boy, let us change the subject."

"With all my heart."

"Irma and I are going to the opera to-night; will you not share our box with us?"

"If you will excuse me, sir," hesitated the young man, "I should rather remain here. I am tired; and, after a short walk, should like to retire early."

"As you like, my boy. In fact, I think you show good sense in your decision. The opera is a bore to me, but I go to please Irma."

At this moment the front door opened and Austin re-entered the house, as cool and collected as if he had been out on the most ordinary errand imaginable.

"Back already?" cried Mr. Annison, in evident surprise.

"Yes, sir; I did not have to go far."

"The young fellow——"

"Lives within a stone's throw of this house. May I have a few words with you, sir?"

"Yes; step into the next room."

They entered the apartment designated, and were engaged in a whispered conversation for some minutes.

"The fellow is probably an impostor," said Mr. Annison, as he re-entered the library; "what Austin tells me gives me every reason to think so. Yet there is much in this business that puzzles me."

He was interrupted by the voice of his daughter.

"Why, papa, are you not ready? Don't you know that we shall be very late?"

Irma Annison looked radiantly beautiful in her elaborate opera costume, yet there was a cloud upon her fair brow that could not be altogether attributed to her father's tardiness.

"I'll be ready in two minutes, my dear," said the banker. "Wait here for me."

And he darted up the stairs with the agility of a boy.

When she was alone with the guest, Irma said:

"You are not going with us?"

"I have asked your father to excuse me; I am very tired."

"May I say a word to you before I go?"

"Ten thousand, if you will."

"I have overheard all that has passed. Oh, leave this house as soon as we are gone, and never return!"

"You believe that fellow to be the true claimant to the name of Calvert Hathaway?"

"As to that I cannot say, but I know you have no right to it."

"Irma, I——"

"Hush! my father is coming!"

"I was not long, was I?" smiled the old gentleman. "Come, my child; sorry you won't go with us, Hathaway."

Calvert Hathaway remained standing at the library door until the rattle of the carriage wheels had died away in the distance; then he put on his hat and light overcoat, left the house and sauntered down the street with an air of the utmost carelessness.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

James Reddall was by no means a stupid detective. The more he thought of Richard Firman, the more he believed there was some fraud in his death.

He determined at last to go to Woodlawn Cemetery and unearth the body.

Taking with him an assistant named Jones he went there.

They opened the grave and exposed the coffin. Then, Jones, trembling, threw down his spade.

"This is a grewsome business," he said; "I don't like it."

"Bah!" ejaculated Reddall, impatiently. "What is the matter with you? You seem completely rattled."

"I am."

"Off with the lid!"

"I'll be hanged if I touch it!"

"Fool! then I will."

Reddall removed the lid of the casket, again revealing the face. His companion averted his eyes.

"You are an idiot!" cried Reddall, with an angry laugh. "Look here!"

The other glanced fearfully around; as he did so a cry of astonishment escaped his lips.

The face upon the pillow in the casket had disappeared; in his hand Reddall held a skillfully-made wax mask.

"By jingo, you were right!" exclaimed the man. "Well, this beats me!"

"It doesn't beat me, and it isn't going to, Jones," said the detective, triumphantly. "But here, take a pull at this brandy flask, man. Why, you're as white as a sheet, and trembling from head to foot."

"Body-snatching isn't in my line," responded Jones, as he put the flask to his lips.

"Neither is it in mine," said Reddall; "but as it happens there is no body to snatch here."

"Ah, I feel better already," said his companion, returning the flask; "that's good stuff."

"Of course it is, or I wouldn't carry it about with me. Well, Jones, what do you think now?"

"That we have made a big discovery."

"I should say we had."

"Richard Firman is not dead at all."

"No more than you or I."

"It was a trick of Gritman's."

"Exactly; but he overreached himself that time. Enos Gritman is a smart man, but—there are others."

"And you are one of them, Mr. Reddall," added Jones, gazing admiringly upon his superior.

"What are you going to do?"

"You ought to be able to guess that. I'm going to find this boy, Richard Firman, wherever he is; I shall do it if it takes me months. When I have hunted him down I shall expose the whole conspiracy and get ahead of Gritman. I imagine Gritman won't do much more detective work after the exposé."

"He, he, he!" giggled the sycophantic Jones, "that's great."

"And now let's fill up this grave and get out before we are discovered. There are watchmen about, and this is a risky business."

Stimulated by this hint, Jones plied the shovel with great energy, and in a very short time the grave was in precisely the same condition in which they had found it.



Then the two men returned to the city, and the next morning James Reddall began his search for Richard Firman.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the night previous to the day on which the two Calvert Hathaways presented themselves at Mr. Annison's mansion, the prison at Sing Sing was in a tumult of excitement.

One of the prisoners, a young man named Henry Earl, who was serving a six-years' sentence for burglary in the second degree, had made his escape.

The fact was discovered by the warden himself, who found one of the keepers lying bleeding and unconscious in the corridor.

Earl's cell door was open, and he had vanished.

The alarm was at once given, and men were sent out in search of the fugitive.

When the keeper was resuscitated he made the following statement:

"I was passing Earl's cell at about ten o'clock, when I noticed to my astonishment, that he had on a brown suit instead of the usual prison garb.

"At once I saw that there was mischief afoot, and I was about to give the alarm when he threw open his cell door, which he had managed somehow to unlock, rushed out and sprang upon me.

"During the fight that followed, he contrived to keep his hand constantly over my mouth, so that I could not cry out.

"At last he succeeded in giving me a terrific blow on the temple, and that's all I remember."

This statement was treated with suspicion; it contained several manifest improbabilities.

The keeper was cross-questioned, but could not be made to contradict himself. His version of the escape, however, was not believed, and he was placed under arrest to await the result of a thorough investigation.

Who had furnished Earl with the suit of clothes in which he had made his escape? How had he succeeded in leaving the prison?

Though a thorough search was made for the fugitive, no trace of him could be found.

A general alarm was sent out, including, of course, a minute description of the escaped prisoner; and that evening all the newsboys in New York were shouting:

"Woxtry! Full account o' der escape from Sing Sing!"

Enos Gritman bought a copy of one of the papers and ran his eyes over the telegraphic report.

An expression of annoyance and anger escaped his lips.

"I knew it! I warned them, yet they allowed the trick to be done. Well, if I am not mistaken in my man, I know what he is up to now. I'll smoke a couple of strong Havanas and try to decide upon my next move. It is a delicate game, but it will be strange if Enos Gritman does not win."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A STARTLING DISCLOSURE.

Of course, Calvert Hathaway No. 1 was no other than Dick Firman.

Gritman had given Dick an address in case he should wish to find him, and the boy went there. Fortunately the detective was in.

"Well, what news?" asked Gritman.

"Much; I am afraid it will not be wise for me to return to Mr. Annison's."

"How is that?"

"The real Calvert Hathaway has appeared."

Evidently the young man expected his companion to evince some surprise at this; but he was disappointed, for Gritman only said, coolly:

"I rather expected this."

"You expected it?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you let me go there at all?"

"Don't get excited, my boy."

"How can I help being excited? I am in a position of fearful peril."

"Haven't you any confidence in me?"

"Yes."

"But the case seems hopeless now," said Dick—"one person does know I am Richard Firman."

"Ah! Who?"

"Irma Annison."

"You were not mad enough to tell her?"

"No; she penetrated my disguise."

"Will she speak?"

"No."

"You are certain of that?"

"I am certain."

"Then what have you to fear?"

"Since she recognized me others may."

"No, it was a spiritual recognition, my boy, a psychological phenomenon; on that score you are safe."

"But I am in danger in other ways."

"Mention one."

"Why, Mrs. Hathaway, Calvert Hathaway's mother, is hourly expected in New York."

"Indeed? Well, tell me the whole story, let me hear all that has happened since your arrival at Valney Annison's house."

Dick briefly informed the detective of the events which we have already chronicled.

After he had finished, Gritman, who had lighted a fresh cigar, sat in deep thought for some minutes. At last he said:

"Keep right on, Dick, and do not lose your confidence in me. I guarantee your success. Mrs. Hathaway shall acknowledge you her son."

"You do not mean to say you believe that Mrs. Hathaway will disown her own son in my favor?" cried Dick, with an incredulous stare.

"I do."

"That is impossible."

"Nothing is impossible, my boy."

"And now I will tell you something that I intended to keep from you for a time."

"Go on."

"You told me your father was lost at sea, I think?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances was he lost?"

"I do not see what that has to do with the case we are considering," said Dick, impatiently.

"Perhaps I shall make that clear, too. Will you answer my question?"

"A storm was raging; my father ventured upon the deck of the vessel on which he was a passenger, and was swept overboard."

"You believe, then, that he died an accidental death?"

"Certainly."

"You are wrong."

"Mr. Gritman!" cried the boy in sudden, irrepressible excitement.

"He was murdered."



"Murdered! my father murdered! Do you know what you are saying, sir?"

"But too well. Shall I tell you the name of his assassin?"

"Yes—yes!"

"It is Valney Annison!"

Dick leaped to his feet, almost shrieking the name;

"Valney Annison!"

"Be careful," said Gritman, laying down his cigar.

The boy sunk back into his chair.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, brokenly, "but I could not help it. Valney Annison my father's murderer, you say?"

"Yes. He was a passenger on board the steamer for the express purpose of disposing of your father before the end of the voyage."

"If any one else had told me this I could not—would not—have believed it; but you—"

"You do not doubt me?"

"I cannot. But how did you learn this?"

"For the present that must remain my secret. Do not urge me to reveal it; I cannot. Are you willing to trust me?"

"I am."

"I am glad to hear you say so, boy, and I can assure you that you will not regret it. Well, do you now see that you have a powerful motive for pursuing this man, Valney Annison, to the bitter end?"

"Yes, yes; but I am working so slowly, so blindly!"

"You have the impetuosity of youth, and, if left to yourself, would ruin all. You must implicitly follow my directions."

"I will do so," said Dick, submissively.

"They have already spoken to you of initiation, I think you said?"

"Mr. Annison spoke of it."

"You must allow yourself to be initiated, to become one of them. When you have learned all their secrets then we can strike."

"But if, in the meantime, Mrs. Hathaway arrives?"

"As she undoubtedly will. Well, have I not told you that I will attend to all that?"

"But the real Calvert Hathaway—how is he to be silenced?"

"Leave him to me," said Gritman, with a peculiar smile.

"Well, I place myself entirely in your hands; I am altogether subject to your directions."

"That is as it should be," replied Enos Gritman, composedly, "and I hope you will not have another relapse. Now I must ask you a question: Have you yet heard Mr. Annison mention a certain Colonel Regent?"

Dick reflected a few moments, then said:

"No."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Well, you will hear the name soon, and see the man. Colonel Regent will, within a few hours, be a fellow-guest of yours at Mr. Valney Annison's."

"Who is he?"

"Depend upon one thing, he is your friend, and you may trust him implicitly. And now"—rising abruptly—"you have been gone long enough. Return at once to Mr. Annison's."

The boy involuntarily shuddered.

"After what you have told me," he said, "I cannot bear to go back."

"Dismiss all such feelings," said Gritman.

"Be what you seem, as nearly as you can. Imagine yourself really Calvert Hathaway; act as if you were he. Everything depends upon you, now—the overthrow of the most cold-blooded,

vindictive band of scoundrels ever united by a common tie—revenge for your father's murder."

"I will banish every thought but that!" cried Dick, in a thrilling voice.

Dick Firman returned to Mr. Annison's house, with a heavy heart and many forebodings.

He hurried to his room, where he passed a restless night.

At the breakfast table he found Mr. Annison, with an open letter in his hand.

After the first greetings, the old gentleman said:

"I have good news, my boy. My old friend, Colonel Regent, will be here to-day. You must have heard of him?"

"I think I have."

"I have not seen him for years, and this is, indeed, an agreeable surprise. He is, heart and soul, one of us."

Late that afternoon, Colonel Regent arrived. He proved to be a tall, red-faced, elderly man, with snow-white hair and whiskers, a halting gait, and a decidedly bad temper.

He had very little to say to Dick, found fault with everything at dinner, and made himself generally disagreeable; but Mr. Annison seemed delighted with his companionship.

"He my friend!" thought Dick. "Mr. Gritman did not know what he was talking about. That man is nobody's friend."

He changed his opinion somewhat the next morning, however, when, at breakfast, the colonel found an opportunity to whisper in his ear:

"Mrs. Hathaway will be here at six o'clock to-night. Go out a little before that hour. Return at eight, and all will be well."

Before Dick had recovered from his astonishment, Colonel Regent was engaged in an animated conversation with Irma; the boy found it impossible to get an opportunity to see him alone again that day.

At about half-past five, in obedience to the injunction he had received, Dick went out.

When, upon his return at eight o'clock, the door was opened for him, a dark form rushed past him into the house, and the voice of Calvert Hathaway—the real Calvert Hathaway—cried:

"My mother is here! Now, you villain, you will see which of us she acknowledges!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE.

Mrs. Hathaway reached the Annison mansion less than half an hour after Dick Firman left it, and was ushered into the reception-room, where she was almost immediately joined by the master of the house.

"My dear madam," cried the banker, approaching her, with extended hand, "I cannot tell you how honored I feel by this visit! I welcome you to my home, and sincerely hope that your stay here will be a long one."

Mrs. Hathaway, a handsome, and, evidently, well-bred woman of about forty, with a sweet, sad face, and dark, melancholy eyes, listlessly took the outstretched hand, saying:

"I thank you, Mr. Annison. But pardon me if I at once broach the subject nearest my heart—my son; is he with you?"

Mr. Annison was evidently embarrassed; he coughed nervously, as he said:

"Your son? Oh, yes, he is here."

The maternal instinct was strong within Mrs. Hathaway, and she took alarm at once.

"There is something wrong!" she cried. "I know it by your tone. There is some trouble—I can see it! Oh, Mr. Annison, tell me what it is?"



"Ahem!" coughed the banker. "Well, to be frank with you, there is a little—what shall I call it—a little complication, but a word from you will set everything right again."

"A word from me! Explain yourself, I beg of you!"

"Certainly; but I—er—in fact, I think I will delegate that task to another."

"To another?"

"Yes, to my old friend, Colonel Regent. You have heard of him?"

"Yes, yes," shuddered Mrs. Hathaway, "I have heard of him. But," as her companion touched the bell upon the table at his elbow, "why can you not tell me whatever there is to be told yourself? Why send for this Colonel Regent?"

"Well," said Mr. Annison, "the fact is, I didn't know just how to break it to you, and—and Regent volunteered to do it for me. He has a straightforward, direct way, and can tell a story better than I can."

At this moment the door was opened, and Austin appeared upon the threshold.

"You rang, sir?"

"Yes; ask Colonel Regent to come to this room at once, if convenient," said Mr. Annison.

As the servant withdrew, the banker turned to his guest, saying, almost tenderly:

"You are needlessly agitated, I assure you, my dear lady; you have nothing to fear. A little misunderstanding has arisen, but—"

"But I shall make it clear," interrupted a deep voice; and, looking up, Mr. Annison and his companion saw the tall form of Colonel Regent in the doorway.

"I beg your pardon for my unceremonious entry," he added, advancing toward Mrs. Hathaway; "I think I am addressing—"

"Mrs. Hathaway, allow me to present my friend, Colonel Regent," interposed Mr. Annison. "He will, as he says, clear up all this mystery—or, at least, he will help do it. And now, if you will excuse me, I will leave you together for a short time."

And the banker, evidently ill at ease, hurried from the room.

Colonel Regent, who was perfectly self-possessed, motioned to his companion to be seated.

The lady, pale and trembling, sank into a chair.

"You have bad news for me?" she faltered.

"Yes," replied the colonel, as he closed the door, "I have bad news."

"Was Mr. Annison deceiving me? Is my son dead?"

"No; he lives, but he is disgraced."

"Disgraced! Calvert Hathaway disgraced!"

"It is as painful for me to say as for you to hear it, Mrs. Hathaway. But—with an abrupt change of tone—"we must know each other better before we proceed."

"What do you mean?"

Colonel Regent took from a vest pocket a small, velvet case, which he handed to his companion, saying:

"Open it."

The lady obeyed.

But, as her eyes rested upon the contents of the case, she started violently, and cried:

"My God! Where did you get this?"

"Do you not know?"

"I cannot guess."

"I got it from him to whom you gave it."

"From—"

"Hush! Do not mention that name in this house!"

For a few moments, Mrs. Hathaway remained silently gazing at the contents of the velvet case—the half of a gold ring.

"Why did he give it to you, Colonel Regent?" she asked, at last. "You and he were bitter enemies."

"You do not yet suspect the truth, Eleanor?" said Colonel Regent, in a strangely tender tone, his eyes fixed on those of his companion.

The lady started, and turned white to the lips.

"My God!" she cried. "You are not he?"

"I am."

"No, no—it is impossible!"

"Calm yourself, Eleanor."

"But he is dead—has been dead many years!"

"He lives, and stands before you."

"What awful mystery is this? Why have you been silent all these years? Why have you allowed the world to believe you dead?"

"What was the world to me? You were all there was in it for me, and you were lost to me. Eleanor, when, in parting, we broke this ring, each taking one half, you swore to be true to me; yet you married Calvert Hathaway."

"I was forced into the marriage by my parents."

"I believe it, and forgive you."

"But you married, too?"

"When I realized that you were lost to me."

"But the report of your death—why did you never contradict it?"

"That is a long story. Suffice it that I still live, and that I live for but one thing."

"And that is—"

"Revenge on the Spotted Six!"

Mrs. Hathaway shuddered.

"That dreadful name! Oh, would that I had never heard it!"

"You are not in sympathy with the objects of the Spotted Six?"

"No, no; yet I tremble to confess it within these walls."

"Mr. Valney Annison believes you a firm ally, as he does me."

"He believes, too, that you are Colonel Regent?"

"Yes. Regent and I resembled each other somewhat; a little makeup added to the likeness. Annison has not seen the colonel for years, so the deception has passed unsuspected."

"But if the real Colonel Regent should appear?"

"He will not."

"How can you be sure?"

"His bones lie beneath the sands of Samoa."

"He is dead?"

"Yes; I killed him. Do not shudder and turn from me, Eleanor. It was in a duel, provoked by himself."

"And now, Eleanor, let us speak of your son."

"Yes, yes! What of him?"

"Your son has been in America longer than you know, Eleanor. He fell into bad company here more than a year ago—very bad company. He gambled, and was a heavy loser. In desperation, he allowed evil counselors to prevail over him, and committed a crime."

"My God! What crime?"

"The crime that United States law calls burglary in the second degree. He was sent to the State prison for six years, but only a few hours ago he escaped, and is a fugitive from justice. I alone know his whereabouts; I alone can save him."

"Is this true? Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Hathaway. "Oh, Robert, you would not, you could not, be so cruel as to trifle with the tenderest feelings of a mother's heart!"

"You wrong me deeply by harboring such a thought for a single instant," said Colonel Regent. "I have told you the truth. Your son succeeded in concealing his identity from every one but me."



He gave his name as Henry Earl; as Henry Earl he was sentenced. You see, he felt some pride in the family name."

"And, you say, he has escaped? Where is he now?"

"He will be here soon, as will also the other claimant of the name of Calvert Hathaway."

"The other claimant! What do you mean? What new mystery is this?"

In reply, Colonel Regent briefly informed his companion of the arrival of the two youths at Mr. Annison's, and of the subsequent exciting events.

"And who is this villain who has dared to rob my boy of his name?" cried Mrs. Hathaway, in great excitement.

"Calm yourself, Eleanor. He is no villain, but an agent of those who have sworn to destroy the Spotted Six."

"But why must this spy of yours take my son's name?"

"Do you not understand that? Because, as the son of Dr. Calvert Hathaway, he will at once be admitted to the closest confidence of these villains."

"Why cannot my son take his place?" persisted Mrs. Hathaway.

"Because he is in sympathy with the Spotted Six, and, consequently, would not work against them."

"Oh, my God!" cried the distracted mother. "What am I to do?"

"Follow my instructions, to the letter."

"What are your instructions?"

"When your son comes here to be identified by you, you must disown him, and acknowledge the other youth as Calvert Hathaway."

At first, Mrs. Hathaway absolutely refused, but at last she yielded to Colonel Regent's arguments, especially as that gentleman promised to save her son from further punishment.

"I will do as you say!" cried Mrs. Hathaway. "I submit; I have no alternative."

"A wise decision, and one that you will not regret in the end. And now fortify yourself for the ordeal that is before you; your son and his rival will soon be here."

Just then Mr. Annison re-entered the room, and soon after they were startled by the sudden entrance of Dick Firman and Calvert Hathaway, as described at the end of a previous chapter.

It was evident that Hathaway had been awaiting his rival's appearance.

"My mother is here. Now, you villain, you will see which of us she acknowledges."

It was with these words that the young man rushed past Dick and into the parlor.

The false Calvert Hathaway was very ill at ease, and filled with forebodings.

If Gritman's scheme should fail—if Mrs. Hathaway refused to acknowledge him—what would be the result?

He quickly followed Hathaway into the parlor.

Mrs. Hathaway stood in the center of the room, her face very pale, her features wearing an expression of indomitable resolution.

Dick saw at a glance that she was prepared for the sacrifice.

"Well, young man," frowned Mr. Annison, addressing Hathaway, "what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"You told me that my mother would be here to-night, and I see that she is. Mother, why do you not speak?"

"Mrs. Hathaway," said Colonel Regent, in clear, incisive tones, "which of these two young men do you acknowledge as your son?"

There was a moment's hesitation; then the lady, placing her hand on Dick's shoulder, said:

"This one."

For a moment the true Calvert Hathaway stood as if rooted to the spot. Then he rushed toward Dick, seized him by the throat, and bore him to the floor.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FUGITIVE IN NEW TROUBLE.

Hathaway seemed actually insane with rage.

"You scoundrel!" he shrieked, as he tightened his grip on Dick Firman's throat, "have you really poisoned even my mother's mind against me? I'll have your life for this!"

Dick was a powerfully-built youth, but he was helpless in the hands of his frenzied assailant.

"Do not kill him!" cried Mrs. Hathaway, trembling from head to foot with the violence of her emotions.

Mr. Annison mistook this for the solicitude of a mother for her son, and, springing forward, attempted to separate the two youths.

In this he was aided by Colonel Regent, and Dick and his opponent were quickly separated.

Grasping young Hathaway firmly by the arm, the colonel looked steadily into his eyes.

It was remarkable what an effect this fixed stare from those piercing gray eyes had upon Calvert Hathaway.

The flush upon his face died away, and gave place to an unnatural pallor; his muscles relaxed, his clinched hands opened, and a sound between a sigh and a groan escaped his lips.

"I should like to speak with you alone a few minutes, young man," said Colonel Regent, quietly.

"Go on," was the response, uttered in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

"Perhaps our friends here will retire," suggested the colonel, with a meaning stare at Mr. Annison, who, together with Mrs. Hathaway and Dick, at once moved toward the door.

The lady gazed longingly at her disowned son, as she passed out, and Mr. Annison saw the look, but misinterpreted it.

"You are wrong to feel any sympathy for the scoundrel, my dear madam," he said. "Why, he would have robbed Calvert here of his birthright. Leave him to Colonel Regent; he knows how to deal with him."

Colonel Regent did know how to deal with his companion.

"Well, you see your plan has failed," he said, in a low, intense voice, still keeping his eyes on Hathaway's face.

"Who are you?" cried the youth. "What are you—a man or a fiend? I feel as if you had mesmerized me, as if I had lost the use of every faculty that could enable me to resist you."

Colonel Regent smiled faintly.

"You must leave this house," he said, "and you must not return until I send you word. I shall know where to send for you, for you will be watched."

"But—"

"Listen. I am your friend, though you do not think so now. You stand on the brink of a precipice, but I will save you from destruction if you obey me implicitly."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then Henry Earl, you will go back to Sing Sing, under your true name."

"My God! You know me?" gasped the wretched youth.

"As well as you know yourself."

"You are in league with Gritman!"

"Enos Gritman is my friend, and we are working together in this case. Well, what do you say? Will you obey or defy me?"

"I see that it is useless to resist; I will obey."

"A wise resolution."

"When shall I see my mother again?"



"Soon, I hope."

"And you will communicate with me, and explain this mystery?"

"You shall know all ere long, and you will thank me for what I have done. And let me warn you to be careful. The police are hot on your scent; you are most imprudent to go about undisguised. It is a wonder you have not been captured before."

"I will be more careful. My one thought was to see my mother, but she has disowned me, and now——"

Hathaway broke down, and buried his face in his hands.

"This is no time for weakness," said Colonel Regent, sternly. "Compose yourself; you must go at once."

"I am ready," said the young man, after a brief silence, during which he seemed to be struggling to conquer his emotions.

"Then come."

The colonel led his companion, unresisting, to the outer door.

"Be prudent, follow my instructions, and all will be well," he whispered, in parting; "disobey them, and you will bring destruction down upon your head."

The next moment, the door had closed upon the unfortunate youth.

Calvert Hathaway strode down the street, after he left Mr. Annison's house, his brain on fire.

Enos Gritman, Colonel Regent, and this youth who had taken his place seemed to have drawn a net about him from which it was impossible to escape.

He wandered on aimlessly for more than half an hour, scarcely knowing in what direction he bent his steps.

Suddenly his way was blocked. He looked up, and saw a burly individual before him. Behind the man, a carriage was drawn up by the curbstone.

In another moment he was seized violently and pushed into the carriage.

The door was closed with a crash, and the vehicle started.

"Who are you?" demanded young Hathaway, when he had regained his breath. "What does all this mean?"

"That's all right, my young friend," was the response, uttered in a complacent, self-satisfied tone. "You'll be taken the best of care of—have no fear on that score."

Hathaway became alarmed at once.

Springing to his feet, he cried:

"I demand your name and——"

He was firmly pushed back into his seat, and the cold muzzle of a revolver was pressed against his temple.

"Softly, my young friend," said his companion, "if you don't want me to pull the trigger. You are trapped!"

"I am under arrest?" gasped Hathaway.

"You've guessed it the first time."

"On what charge?" demanded the young man, assuming an indignant air.

"Oh, don't try any bluff on me," sneered his companion, "for it won't work. You asked my name?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's James Reddall; did you ever hear it before?"

"Never."

"Well, it's pretty well known among the criminal classes."

"To which I do not belong."

"Humph! That's, to say the least, a matter of opinion. And now, since I have been so good as to tell you my name, perhaps you will favor me with yours?"

"You have arrested me without knowing my name, eh?"

"Oh, no; but I am curious to know what particular cognomen you are traveling under just now."

"Well," said Hathaway, "you can find that out for yourself."

"All right, my friend; I know your real name, at any rate."

"And what do you imagine it to be?"

"There is no imagination about it; your name is Richard Firman."

Hathaway stared at the detective, with an expression of mingled astonishment and relief.

Then, despite the fact that he still felt the muzzle of the revolver against his temple, he uttered a short laugh.

"Oh, that's my name, is it?" he said.

"Yes, that's your name. Oh, it isn't so easy to fool James Reddall. I knew you at a glance, in spite of your wig and makeup."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes. I have been shadowing Gritman lately, and I am dead onto his little game and yours."

"You think you have done quite a night's work, I suppose?" said Hathaway, whose self-confidence had now quite returned.

"I am satisfied."

"I'm glad of it. I can't complain. This is quite an amusing adventure."

"You won't think it so funny when you get to jail."

"Nor you, either, if you have any professional pride. I am no more Richard Firman than you are."

"That's all right."

"You say I wear a wig; perhaps it would pay you to examine it."

Reddall did examine it; then his jaw fell, and he exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest chagrin:

"Can I have been mistaken?"

"It looks a good deal like it. Do you see any 'makeup' on my face?"

The detective drew the slide of a dark-lantern, and threw the light into the young man's face, examining every feature carefully.

"I've made a mistake," he said, at last, as he replaced his revolver in his pocket, and closed the lantern.

"Well, I told you so."

"I owe you an apology, sir."

"That's all right, but I'd advise you to be a little more careful the next time. If this thing should come out, it would be very likely to subject you to a good deal of ridicule."

Reddall's face crimsoned with mortification.

"I wouldn't have it come out for the world!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, well, officer," said Hathaway, who, seeing that his real identity was not suspected, felt perfectly at his ease, "I shall not betray you. Where are you taking me, anyway?"

"That reminds me!" exclaimed Reddall, and he knocked upon the front window of the coupé.

When the vehicle stopped, he said to the driver:

"You needn't go to the station; just drive about the streets till I tell you to stop."

"I'd better get out here," suggested Hathaway, with an assumed air of carelessness.

"No; wait a few minutes."

"What for?"

"I'd give a hundred dollars rather than have this thing get out," replied the detective, as the coupé again started.

"Oh, set your mind at rest on that score; I shall say nothing to any one, Mr. Reddall."

"Thank you, sir! But I want to explain a few things to you, and see if you cannot help put me on the right track."

"What can I possibly do? What do I know about the case?"

"Perhaps you can do something. This Richard Firman, for



whom I took you, murdered his employer, Mr. Basil Forster, was convicted, but escaped."

Hathaway started.

"Oh, I have heard of the case!" he exclaimed. "But I thought the young fellow died?"

"So it was believed, but he did not. He was resuscitated by a fellow named Gritman, a sort of would-be detective, and is at large now."

"This is a queer story," cried Hathaway.

"But a true one. And, remember, I shall expect you to regard as confidential all that I have told or shall tell you."

"You may rely upon me, sir."

"I have suspected the truth from the first, and have been shadowing Gritman. I have found reason to believe that young Firman is an inmate of the house of Mr. Valney Annison, and that he is disguised."

"Ah!"

"I saw you leave that house to-night, and I did what I seldom do—jumped at a conclusion. I shadowed you, saw you enter that saloon, witnessed your row with that fellow who followed you in— By the way, what was the trouble about?"

"Oh, he and I had an old grudge, and I took that opportunity to wipe it out," replied Hathaway, glibly. "I am very hot-blooded, and often do things in the heat of passion that I regret afterward."

"We all do. Well, somehow, I had gotten it into my head that you were Richard Firman, and when you came out I carried into execution a plan that I conceived on the spur of the moment."

"You are quick-witted," commented Hathaway.

"Well, I had the carriage there; you were in a scrape, and wanted to get out of the way, and it all seemed easy enough. Well, sir, now you know the whole story; do you think you can help me?"

Calvert Hathaway reflected.

Here, it seemed to him, was an opportunity to revenge himself on the youth who had stolen his name, an opportunity too good to be neglected.

"Yes," he said, "I can help you!"

"How?"

"If I am not mistaken, I can tell you just where to lay your hands on Richard Firman. Go to Mr. Annison's, and inquire for Calvert Hathaway. You will, I believe, find that he and Firman are one and the same."

## CHAPTER XVII.

MR. OCTAVIUS BROWN.

On hearing this, Reddall showed more excitement than was usual with him.

He aimed to always appear phlegmatic, and to take whatever happened coolly and philosophically; but this was too much for him.

Grasping his companion's arm, he asked, in a voice that shook, despite his efforts to control it:

"Young man, do you know what you are talking about?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, I— Excuse my agitation, but this is an important matter to me."

"That's all right. I shall be pleased to give you any information in my power."

"My professional reputation is at stake," added Reddall.

"You are anxious to capture this young fellow, eh?"

"More than anxious. When it is known that I, alone and unaided, ferreted out this mystery, and arrested the assassin of Basil

Forster, I shall be a made man. Why, it will be the finest piece of detective work done in this country for years."

"Well, I'll do what I can to help you, and I think I can enable you to accomplish your purpose."

"When I have Richard Firman under arrest, I will give you a hundred dollars."

This was a most welcome offer to Hathaway, for he had less than two dollars in his pocket, all that remained of a small sum given him by those who had helped him to escape.

"You mean that?" he cried, eagerly.

"I do, of course."

"Well, I'm not betraying the fellow for a price, but because I hate him. However, I need the money, and shall be glad to get it."

"I imagined so," said Reddall, glancing at his companion's rather shabby attire. "Well, you may get it this very night."

"To-night?"

"Yes, if your suspicions prove correct, and I make the arrest. Where can I meet you?"

The detective was now in an uncommonly genial and liberal mood. He believed that he was on the eve of a great exploit, and would have been almost as willing to give his informant five hundred as one hundred dollars.

Hathaway hesitated a few moments before replying.

"Well," he then said, "suppose you give me an address, and I'll call on you."

"It's all the same to me. Here's my card."

Hathaway thrust the bit of pasteboard into his pocket.

"I'll call, then, to-night, if that won't put you out," he said, hesitatingly. "Would it suit you if I came in two hours? It will be rather late, but—"

"That'll do well enough," interrupted Reddall. "I'm used to receiving callers at all hours of the day and night. If I'm not in when you get there, show the card to my housekeeper, and she will let you wait, if you want to."

"Very well, Mr. Reddall."

"And now, Mr. —"

"My name is Smith."

"Now, Mr. Smith, I suppose you would like to get out."

"I may as well. You will go back to Mr. Annison's, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"There, I'd be willing to bet a good deal, you'll find the young man you took me for."

"If I do, I shall be more than glad to pay you your hundred dollars."

"For two hours, then, good-by."

And Hathaway leaped lightly from the carriage, which had stopped in obedience to a signal from the detective.

When Reddall had given the driver his directions, he leaned back comfortably in his seat, and muttered, with a complacent smile:

"Well, if I don't win this case by sheer merit, my name's not James Reddall! Byrnes will appreciate this, if he knows what clever work is; and who can tell what will come of it?"

With similar pleasant reflections, the detective beguiled the time until the coupé drew up at the door of Mr. Annison's mansion.

Then he sprang out, ran up the steps, and rang the bell, an exultant smile on his face, as he thought of the triumph he was about to achieve.

The door was opened by Austin.

"A young gentleman named Hathaway—Mr. Calvert Hathaway—is stopping here, I think?" said Reddall, interrogatively.



"He is, sir."

"Is he in?"

"I'll see, sir. Will you step in?"

The stately Austin ushered the visitor into the reception-room, then said:

"Card, if you please, sir."

Reddall at once produced one of a large stock of cards which he always carried about with him; it was a rather dirty one, and bore the name, "Octavius Brown."

Austin glanced at it suspiciously, and, holding it at arm's length, left the room.

It happened that Dick Firman and Colonel Regent were alone together in the library when Reddall arrived.

As the detective's voice reached the colonel's ear, he started; when Austin entered with the card, he glanced at it, then murmured:

"I thought so."

"What shall I say, sir?" inquired Austin, addressing Dick.

"I don't know," answered the lad. "Who can this Mr. Octavius Brown be?"

"Some old friend, whom you have forgotten, I presume," interposed Colonel Regent, quickly. "Ask him to be kind enough to wait a few minutes, Austin."

"Yes, sir."

When the servant had left the room, Colonel Regent turned to Dick, and said, quietly:

"I know who this Mr. Brown is."

"Who is he, sir?"

"A detective."

"A detective!"

And the boy sprang to his feet.

"Hush! Yes, he is a detective, and his name is James Reddall."

"What can his business be with me?"

"To arrest you, of course. But don't be alarmed; I'll see if I can't send him away."

"How can you do that?"

Colonel Regent did not reply. Gazing meditatively at the floor, he said, as if talking to himself:

"I never gave Reddall credit for having shrewdness enough for this. How did he manage it? Ah, I believe I have it!"

Then the old man rose briskly to his feet, saying:

"Leave him to me, my boy."

And he moved toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dick.

"I am going to see Mr. Octavius Brown myself."

"If he is really here to arrest me, he will not let you throw him off the track."

"You will see."

"While you are with him, had I not better try to make my escape?"

"By no means; remain just where you are. If I am not greatly mistaken, your visitor will leave the house before you do."

A few moments later Colonel Regent entered the reception-room, where Reddall was impatiently pacing the floor.

"Mr. Octavius Brown?" he asked, politely.

"That is my name, sir," replied the detective, with a look of surprise.

"Are you sure?"

"Eh?"

"I asked you if you were sure that your name was Octavius Brown?"

"Do you mean to insult me?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Reddall."

The detective started; then he said:

"It seems that you know me!"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, it makes no difference; I am James Reddall, and I am a detective."

"I knew that, too."

"I am here on professional business. Is the boy who is known here as Calvert Hathaway in the house?"

"He is."

"I want him. The fact is, sir, I have discovered that he is no other than young Richard Firman, the murderer of Basil Forster."

Reddall evidently expected his companion to show some emotion at this statement, which he delivered in a most melodramatic manner, but Colonel Regent only said, in the coolest way imaginable:

"Dear me! Won't you be seated, Mr. Reddall?"

As he spoke, he closed the door which opened into the hall.

But Reddall sprang forward, in some excitement, crying:

"Open that door! I don't propose to have the boy sneak out of the house under my very nose!"

"Oh, anything to oblige you, my dear sir," and Colonel Regent reopened the door. "I only thought," he added, "that you might object to having a few things that I have to say to you overheard."

"What can you have to say to me, sir? I believe this is only a trick to give the boy a chance to escape, and I don't propose to allow——"

"Now, pray, do not excite yourself, Mr. Reddall; I only want to say a few words to you. Do you know, I have a strong impression that Calvert Hathaway will not leave this house with you to-night?"

"It is a mistaken impression, sir, for he will. Come, to business; if you have anything to say, say it."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### REDDALL MEETS HIS MATCH.

"I will. Did you ever meet a man known as Van Turner, alias James Fox, otherwise 'Slippery Jim'?"

As Colonel Regent asked this question, he fixed his keen, gray eyes on his companion's face, as if he would read his very thoughts.

An extraordinary change came over Reddall's countenance; he turned first red, then pale, then he stammered:

"No—yes—no I don't know; the name seems familiar. I—confound it! What has this Slippery Jim got to do with this case?"

"A good deal, perhaps. I am surprised that a detective of your experience has never heard of Van Turner. He was once one of the best-known confidence men in Chicago, and also had a pretty extensive acquaintance in St. Louis. He has served a term in the Illinois State's Prison, and two in a penitentiary in the same State. About eight years ago, he made up his mind to reform, and he came East, and entered the detective service. His abilities fitted him for the work, and he gained some reputation in his new profession. He managed to cover his tracks well, to sink his past life so completely that I believe I am the only man in New York who knows that Slippery Jim and James Reddall are one and the same."

"Close that door!" cried Reddall, hoarsely, as he wiped the great beads of perspiration from his brow.

"I thought you'd want me to do so," smiled the colonel, as he did as his companion asked.



"This story of yours is preposterous!" gasped Reddall. "I—I deny it!"

"Your lips do, but your face does not."

"You say that you are the only man in New York who knows this?" asked the detective, after a brief silence.

"I said so."

"Who are you?"

"I am known as Colonel Regent."

"Do you mean to make this thing public?"

"I have known it for years, but have kept it a secret, because I thought you ought to be given a chance to succeed in your new career; I shall continue to be silent on condition that you do not molest this lad, Calvert Hathaway."

"I will not accept your terms," burst from Reddall's lips. "This arrest will be the crowning achievement of my career; it is a remarkable case, and I am not going to lose the fruits of my work!"

"What good will the glory of having worked up the case do you if you are disgraced and dismissed from the force?"

"I will deny everything you assert! I defy you!"

"Oh, very well! A word or two more, and then, if you insist, I will bring Calvert Hathaway in to you."

"Go on."

"In your extensive experience as a detective, you must have heard the name of Curtis Burrill."

Again Reddall leaped up, his face purple with excitement and rage.

"W-what do you m-mean?" he stuttered.

Colonel Regent was perfectly composed.

"I only meant to ask you a simple question," he said.

"You want to know if I ever heard the name—what is it?"

"Curtis Burrill," replied the colonel, placidly.

"No, sir; I never heard of it in my life."

"Ah! Then I have been misinformed. Well, there is nothing more to be said; I will open the door, and you can step into the next room, where you will find Calvert Hathaway."

Colonel Regent was about to turn the knob, when his companion interrupted him.

"Wait!" he said, in a faint voice. "My head is in a whirl!"

"Oh, then, you are in no condition to make an arrest. I will wait until you are recovered, and I can assure you that Mr. Hathaway will make no attempt to escape."

There was a short pause, which was presently broken by Reddall, who asked:

"What do you know about Curtis Burrill?"

"Oh, it would not interest you, since you never heard his name before in your life," replied the colonel, dryly.

"Do not torture me; tell me what you know," said Reddall, almost appealingly.

"Ah, then, your memory is improving! You think you have heard the name of Curtis Burrill before?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And you want me to tell you what I know about him? Well, my dear sir, I know all!"

"All!"

"All about that big steal from the city, which you discovered, and which you said nothing about because Mr. Curtis Burrill, the ringleader in the conspiracy, paid you a cool hundred thousand dollars to keep your mouth shut. You gladly accepted the hush money, and you might be a wealthy man to-day if you had kept out of Wall Street. You see, I know all about it; and I may add that I have documentary evidence of the truth of every word I have said."

"You must be his satanic majesty himself!" exclaimed Reddall.

"Oh, no; I am only a man who possesses the rare faculty of keeping his eyes and ears open—that's all. And now are you going to arrest Calvert Hathaway?"

"If I do not, will you promise me to keep secret what you know about me?"

"I have had possession of the knowledge a number of years, and I have never spoken on the subject."

"May I rely upon you?"

"Yes, if you abandon these investigations in this case of Richard Firman."

"I will abandon them."

"If you keep your promise, I shall certainly keep mine."

"I have no choice; you have it in your power to ruin me."

"That is about the size of it, Mr. Reddall."

"You need not worry, I shall not trouble Hathaway, or Firman, or whoever he is."

"Very good. I suppose you got the information that led you to this place from a tall, smooth-faced young man, whom you at first supposed to be Firman himself?"

"How did you know that?"

"Oh, I have a talent for drawing inferences. It is so, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Do you mind telling me just how you met that young man?"

"No; though I suppose you know all about it already."

"If I did, I should not ask you."

"Well, it was like this," and Reddall went on to give his companion the particulars of his interview with the real Calvert Hathaway.

When he had finished, Colonel Regent remarked:

"Humph! You have a few things to learn yet, Mr. Reddall."

"What do you mean?"

"You have heard of Henry Earl, I suppose?"

"The fellow who escaped from Sing Sing a day or two ago? Oh, yes."

"Well, that was Henry Earl."

"Is it possible?"

"I know what I am talking about, Mr. Reddall."

"Then I'm in luck!"

"How is that?"

"In an hour from now the young fellow will be at my rooms to receive some money I promised him."

"For giving you the information about Richard Firman, eh?"

"Yes. Then I can put the bracelets on him."

"Use your own discretion, Mr. Reddall."

"I'll be off at once. This chance, at least, shall not be lost. You will not forget our agreement, Colonel Regent?"

"See that you do not."

"Don't worry about me. You are certainly a remarkable man, colonel; you should have been a detective."

"Thank you. Good-night."

When his visitor had left the house, Colonel Regent returned to the library, where Dick was awaiting him.

"Well?" questioned the boy, breathlessly.

"It is all right," said the colonel; "he has gone."

"He was really here to arrest me?"

"Yes."

"How did you get rid of him?"

"That would be a long story. I put him off the track."

At this moment, the door opened, and Mrs. Hathaway entered the room.

Her cheeks were aflame, her eyes blazing with anger, as she confronted Colonel Regent.

"Wretch!" she cried. "You have sacrificed my son—you have



delivered him over to the authorities! I overheard it all. I will remain silent no longer! You have broken my heart, and I will destroy you!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### GREEK MEETS GREEK.

Mrs. Hathaway's impassioned exclamation seemed to have no effect upon Colonel Regent; he only smiled quietly, saying:

"You are excited, my dear madam."

"Who would not be excited, desperate," cried the lady, "at the prospect of the ruin of an only son?"

"If your son is ruined, it will be your own fault," said the colonel.

"You have betrayed him to the police!"

"You were listening, were you, Mrs. Hathaway?" said Colonel Regent.

"Yes, I was listening. I suspected your treachery; a mother's instinct is to save her child, even at the cost of her own life, and I listened."

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Hathaway," interposed the colonel. "I told you I would save your son, and I meant what I said. Through my intercession, he will be pardoned by the governor, if his chances are not ruined by your interference."

"What do you mean?"

"You cannot expect the governor to pardon an escaped criminal. Your son must be returned to Sing Sing before he can hope to benefit by the executive clemency."

"It is false!"

"Wait, Mrs. Hathaway. He would inevitably be recaptured, sooner or later, so it is better that his arrest be made at once. Have no fear; all will be well; only trust me, and do not interfere with my plans."

"Oh, what am I to do?" exclaimed Mrs. Hathaway, distractedly.

"Simply obey me."

"You seem a man of iron. Have you no sympathy with my sufferings? Do you hate me, as well as my boy?"

Colonel Regent was evidently moved.

"It is not possible that you think that, Eleanor?" he said, sadly.

"If you do not hate me, why are you doing that which makes me the unhappiest mother in the world?"

"I am acting for your best good, and for your son's," replied the colonel. "Leave all to me, and I will save him, and restore your peace of mind."

Mrs. Hathaway seemed for some moments to be reflecting deeply; at last she said, in a tone in which there was more of despair than of hope:

"I have no alternate. I must trust you."

"You will not regret it. But hush; our host is coming."

Mr. Annison, who had been out during the excited interview between Reddall, the detective, and Colonel Regent, had just re-entered the house.

"Yes, Robert, I will trust you," murmured Mrs. Hathaway; then she turned to meet their host, and the subject was dropped.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meantime, Calvert Hathaway had been impatiently awaiting the hour appointed for his interview with James Reddall.

Among the bad habits acquired by young Hathaway during his tour round the world was a love of alcohol. At this momentous period of his career he craved the unnatural stimulant more than usually, and most of the time that intervened between his parting from Reddall and his start for the rendezvous, he spent in a

barroom, where he made himself a welcome guest by ordering drinks until the last penny of his slender stock of cash was gone.

Then he left the place, not stupefied, but fired, by the liquor he had consumed, and much relieved by the news he had accidentally learned—that the officer he had knocked senseless in the other barroom had not been killed, or even much injured.

"Now, then," he muttered, as he entered the street, and shiveringly turned up the collar of his thin coat—for the night had grown cold—"for my detective. This hasn't been a bad evening's work for me. After I get the hundred, I'll furnish myself with some sort of a disguise. I've been lucky in escaping detection thus far, but I can't expect that sort of thing to last. And, after I procure my disguise, what shall I do? I'll go back and force my mother to tell me why she disowned me and claimed that this fellow—this murderer, Firman—was her son. He will be in jail then, and perhaps she will be released from the strange spell which seems to bind her. She is a victim—I know that; my mother always loved me better than I deserved, and would never have disowned me, except under the strongest compulsion."

These and a hundred other excited thoughts whirled through the young man's brain as he hurried along.

As, after fifteen minutes' walk, he paused before a small, two-story frame house, he mused:

"So this is the detective's home, is it? Not much of a place, but there's a hundred or more inside for me, so here goes!"

He ascended the steps, and rang the bell, which was promptly answered by an elderly woman, of whom he asked:

"Is Mr. Reddall in?"

"Are you the gentleman he is expecting?" queried the woman.

"I am."

"Step in, sir."

Hathaway found the detective awaiting him in a dingy, little parlor.

"Hope I haven't kept you waiting," he said, as he seated himself.

"Oh, no," was the reply, "though I looked for you sooner; I was beginning to be afraid you could not find the place."

As the detective spoke, Hathaway saw the elderly woman leave the house. It was the habit of Reddall's housekeeper to spend her nights at home; her hours in the detective's establishment were usually from early morning until ten o'clock in the evening.

"I would have come sooner," replied the young man, "but I didn't suppose I should find you any earlier."

"Well, it's all right, since you're here at last."

"Have you made the arrest?" asked Hathaway, anxiously.

"No."

"How is that?"

"It was all a mistake."

"What was all a mistake?"

"The young fellow was not Richard Firman at all."

"Not Richard Firman! You have been deceived!" exclaimed Hathaway.

"No, only mistaken."

"Humph! Two serious mistakes in one evening," sneered the young man. "That's a rather bad record for a detective of any repute."

Hathaway had begun to feel ill-natured as he saw his prospect of earning the hundred dollars vanishing.

"Oh, well, mistakes can be rectified sometimes," said Reddall, quietly. "At any rate, you shall not be a loser."

"You mean—"

"That I will pay you the hundred dollars I promised you, although your information proved erroneous."

Hathaway stared at his companion in astonishment.



"That is certainly very good of you," he said. "I do need the money, but——"

"Oh, you must not refuse to accept it."

And Reddall opened a drawer in the table beside which he was sitting, and took from it a large roll of bills.

Hathaway watched him, with greedy eyes, as he slowly and deliberately counted out one hundred dollars.

"Here you are, my young friend," said the detective, extending the money to his companion.

As Hathaway stretched out his hand to receive it, Reddall, with a sudden change of front, attempted to clasp upon his wrists a pair of handcuffs, which, until this moment, he had, by a species of legerdemain, managed to hide.

But the young man was too quick for him.

Leaping to his feet, he cried:

"No, you don't! I suspected you, and now I see I was right."

Reddall quickly arose, stepped to the door, and placed his back against it.

"That's all right, my boy," he said. "You're my prisoner, whether you like it or not."

"Am I?" said Hathaway, a look of determination on his tightly compressed lips.

"You certainly are. I know you."

"Oh, you do? And who am I?"

"Henry Earl, who escaped from Sing Sing not very long ago."

Hathaway's worst fears were realized; he was known.

"You're mistaken!" he stammered.

"Oh, no, I'm not," said the detective. "I knew you from the first; I thought you wouldn't escape me."

This fiction had the effect of maddening the young man.

"So I have deliberately walked into a trap, have I?" he cried.

"That's just what you have done."

"But I am not caught yet."

"Oh, yes you are," laughed Reddall, perfectly confident that the hardest part of his task was over. "You are my prisoner."

"Not yet."

"Don't allow yourself to indulge in any thoughts of resistance," said the detective, with his most determined air, "for I don't propose to permit anything of the sort."

"How are you going to prevent it?" asked Hathaway, in his eyes a look that would have warned some men that he was in a desperate frame of mind, a mental condition in which he would hesitate at nothing.

"By means of this."

And Reddall suddenly produced a revolver, and leveled it at the young man's head.

But, as quick as thought, Hathaway sprang forward, dashed the weapon from his hand, and clutched him by the throat.

Then followed a struggle, in which the frenzied ex-convict had from the first the advantage.

In a few moments, Reddall lay unconscious upon the floor, bleeding from a wound on the forehead.

Hathaway bent over him.

"Not dead," he muttered; "probably not seriously hurt. I must make my escape; but first——"

He opened the drawer from which he had seen the detective take the money.

The roll of bills was still there; the next moment Hathaway had transferred it to his pocket.

"Now," he muttered, as he rushed from the room, "to revenge myself on Richard Firman! He has done me a terrible wrong, but I will be even with him before many hours have passed."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

On the morning following the evening the events of which have formed the subject of the last few chapters of our story, Mr. Annison took Dick aside, and said to him, smilingly:

"The great event is to occur to-night."

"What event?" asked the boy, puzzled.

"Why, the event which should be the sole subject of your thoughts—your initiation."

"Oh!"

Mr. Annison seemed displeased with this non-committal ejaculation.

"You do not appear very enthusiastic," he said, the suggestion of a frown on his brow.

Dick certainly was not enthusiastic, but he wished to appear so, and he said:

"You are mistaken, sir."

"Of course you are," added Colonel Regent, who entered the room at that moment. "You must remember, my dear Annison, that our young friend is a stranger to such experiences as those we have passed through, and the Spotted Six cannot be to him what it is to us."

"True," said Mr. Annison, somewhat mollified.

"He would not be the son of his father, however," added the colonel, "if he did not enter, heart and soul, into the work before him."

"I shall do so," said Dick, with a meaning which Colonel Regent understood, but Mr. Annison did not.

At seven o'clock that evening a closed carriage stood in front of Mr. Annison's mansion; the banker, Colonel Regent, and Dick were preparing for their journey.

"In an hour, Calvert," said Mr. Annison, laying his hand familiarly on the boy's shoulder, "you will be in the headquarters of the Spotted Six; in another hour you will be a member of the organization founded by your father so many years ago. And now you must allow me to blindfold you."

Dick started, rather nervously, and asked:

"What need is there of that, Mr. Annison?"

"You cannot be permitted to know the exact location of our headquarters until you are one of us."

As he finished speaking, he bound a silk handkerchief around the boy's head. Dick was then led by his two companions—the banker and Colonel Regent—to the carriage.

When all three had taken their places, the vehicle started at a rapid rate.

Dick was forcibly and rather unpleasantly reminded of that other memorable ride, when he had also been blindfolded.

What would Mr. Annison say if he knew that this was not his first visit to the headquarters of the Spotted Six?

If, by any accident, his identity as Richard Firman should be revealed, he could not doubt that death would be his punishment for the deception he had practiced.

In half an hour the carriage was driven on board a ferryboat, bound, as Dick knew from the direction the vehicle had taken, for the New Jersey shore.

He could no longer doubt that his suspicions as to their destination had been correct.

As the boat started, Mr. Annison said:

"I think I'll step out on the deck and smoke a cigar, Regent—that is, if you don't mind remaining with our young friend here?"

"Not at all," replied the colonel.

"You see, Calvert," added Mr. Annison, half apologetically,



half jokingly, "we're obliged to keep you under surveillance for a time, but it will soon be over."

"That is all right, Mr. Annison," said the boy, and the banker stepped from the coach.

When they were alone, Colonel Regent said:

"You are nervous."

"I am, a little," acknowledged Dick.

"You need not be; I do not imagine that there is any terrible ordeal in store for you."

"The mystery that surrounds the whole business is what makes me uneasy," said Dick. "If I knew the purpose of this society, if I understood why I am forced to make this journey——"

"You will understand all soon," interrupted Colonel Regent, "and will then know that it was your duty to aid me in overthrowing this band of murderous scoundrels. It is a sacred duty that you owe your father's memory. You have not forgotten what I told you of Annison's treachery to him?"

"Can I ever forget it?" cried the boy, passionately.

"Bear it in mind to-night. What Valney Annison did, he did at the instigation of the Spotted Six."

"But what does the Spotted Six mean?" asked Dick, with uncontrollable curiosity.

"That you will learn, among other things, to-night. No more now; Annison is returning."

A few minutes after Mr. Annison had resumed his place, the boat lurched into its dock, and was made fast.

A rapid drive of nearly half an hour followed; as nearly as Dick could judge, the carriage went in the direction of Bergen Heights.

At last it halted, and the boy was assisted to the ground by his two companions, and led up a short flight of stone steps and into a house which, he had no doubt, was the same he had visited before, and where he had nearly met his death.

"This way," said Mr. Annison, taking him by the arm, and leading through a long hallway.

A few moments later, he was conducted into a room; and the hum of voices led him to believe he had reached the meeting hall of the strange band of which he was about to become a member.

When he had been led a few paces, the voice of Mr. Annison cried: "Halt!"

The boy obeyed; the next moment the bandage was removed from his eyes.

When he became accustomed to the light, he gazed curiously about him.

His anticipations were realized; he was in the same room from which Irma had taken him, blindfolded, a few days before. The portraits that had so interested him still hung upon the walls; under the largest one was seated a venerable-looking man, with long, white hair and beard, and patriarchal mien.

Seven other men were seated in various parts of the room; all eyes were fixed upon the boy, with evident interest.

"Brothers," said Mr. Annison, "I have the honor and pleasure of introducing to you Mr. Calvert Hathaway, the son of our preserver, who desires that his long-delayed initiation as a member of our order shall take place to-night."

The eight men arose, and each in his turn took Dick's hand, uttering the one word, "Welcome!"

When all had resumed their seats, the old man seated under the large portrait at the end of the room, who seemed to occupy a position of authority, said:

"Let the roll be called."

Eleven names, including those of Mr. Annison and Colonel Regent, were called; to all but one their owners responded "Present."

When the name, Horace Dunscomb, was called, one of the members said:

"I am certain that Brother Dunscomb will be here. I have received word from him that he has information of importance which he intends to lay before the meeting to-night."

Dick, who chanced to be looking at Colonel Regent, saw an expression of uneasiness flit across his face.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE HISTORY OF THE SPOTTED SIX.

As he observed that Dick was looking questioningly at him, Colonel Regent quickly averted his face; but, as he did so, there was a warning look in his eyes that was not lost upon the boy.

"The first business of this meeting," said the old man, rising from his seat—he had answered "Present" when the name Richard Worthen was called—"is the initiation of a new member. The only persons we ever receive, or ever can receive, are descendants of the founders of our order, and there has not been an initiation of such interest to us all since the Spotted Six began its work."

Again all eyes were fixed upon the face of Dick, who, keeping his eyes upon the portrait of Calvert Hathaway, maintained his composure with some difficulty.

"He," went on Mr. Worthen, "is the son of the man but for whom five of those present would now be in their graves, the man we know as Our Preserver."

There was a low murmur of applause; when it had subsided, the speaker went on:

"Calvert Hathaway, Jr., the son and namesake of the great man whose untimely death we all deplore, is worthy of every consideration, every honor, we can bestow upon him.

"I pronounce him so because he is the offspring of the man to whom our charter members owe their salvation from death, and also for the reason that, so far as I have been able to learn, his own life and personal character have been worthy of his most distinguished ancestry."

Mr. Worthen paused; and Dick, seeing that something was expected of him, made a low bow.

"In accordance with our custom, when a new member is received," continued Mr. Worthen, "the history of the Spotted Six will now be read to him. Orator, I resign for the time in your favor."

As the speaker resumed his seat, another man, a tall, gaunt individual, rose, slowly unfolded a paper that he took from his pocket, and began as follows:

"Stranger, listen to the story of the Spotted Six.

"The name may seem a peculiar one to you, but when you have heard the history of our organization you will appreciate its significance.

"Twenty years ago there existed a society known as the Invincibles. It was composed of one hundred men (its membership was limited to that number), twenty-five Englishmen, twenty-one Americans, twenty-five Russians, and twenty-nine Frenchmen.

"The purpose of this society was to reform, by drastic means, some of the political and social abuses of Europe.

"All its members were men of wealth; all had one object at heart—an object for which they were ready to sacrifice anything, even their lives.

"They were a picked hundred, such a body of men as has not existed since the historic days of Rome's greatness, such as will, perhaps, never exist again.

"Years were spent in bringing them together, an immense amount of money was expended to the same end.

"When all was done, we—I was one of the number—were a



band of enthusiasts so powerful that, had not treachery interfered, we should have revolutionized Europe; kings would have been dethroned, and the monarchical form of government swept out of existence.

"Had we succeeded, aristocracy would have been but a name, instead of what it now is.

"But we have a hope that our descendants will continue and end the work we have begun.

"We were certain of success—too sure, as the result proved—and not sufficiently cautious.

"When our organization was completed, our plan of work perfected, we decided to first show our power by the removal of Europe's greatest autocrat, the Czar of Russia.

"Months were spent in arranging our plans to this end, and at last all was prepared for the great move.

"The man selected to do the deed was one who had contrived to ingratiate himself with the Czar, and who was high in his favor; he was a Frenchman, and his name was Pierre Maurel.

"He was of low birth, but a man of remarkable ability, and an enthusiast in the cause of universal freedom.

"It was his desire to strike the first blow in behalf of the Invincibles.

"Everything was arranged, our plans seemed sure of success, a day was appointed for the consummation of our plot.

"But, an hour before the time appointed for the removal of the Czar, Pierre Maurel was found dead in his bed.

"What was the cause of his sudden decease?

"The doctors said heart disease, and we believed them; at that time we did not dream of suspecting treachery.

"We were, indeed, too sure; instead of attempting an investigation, we drew lots to see who should be the next to make the attempt upon the tyrant's life.

"The task fell to a Russian, and a better man for the purpose could not have been found. He hated the Czar—and with good reason—and welcomed his duty with the greatest enthusiasm.

"Nearly three months were spent in arranging our plans; at last all was perfected, and a day was set for the accomplishment of the deed.

"As before, on the appointed night, the hero, who was to have immortalized himself, was found lying dead in his bed; and, as before, the cause of his death was declared to be heart disease.

"We now, of course, became suspicious of treachery.

"Each of us suspected his brother, and for a time discord reigned.

"But this state of affairs did not last long; we soon became convinced that, if there had been any treachery, it had not been on the part of one of our numbers.

"And what could any outsider possibly know of our doings? we asked ourselves. All our meetings had been conducted with the utmost secrecy and caution.

"For weeks we dared not make another move; but at last, finding no cause for suspicion or fear, we again resumed our task.

"This time it seemed certain that the Czar would die. The man appointed to remove him was an American.

"One night, while we were anxiously awaiting the tidings of his success, we were horrified to learn that not only he, but ten others of our band, had died suddenly and mysteriously.

"There was now panic in our ranks; we could no longer doubt that we had been betrayed—but by whom?

"That question long remained unanswered.

"We removed our headquarters from Russia to Germany, and for months remained comparatively inactive.

"We had secret agents at work constantly to discover who had

been guilty of the treachery from which we had suffered, but their efforts proved unavailing.

"At last we reorganized, and began work again.

"A plot against the lives of the then reigning Emperor of Germany and several members of the so-called royal family was formed.

"Everything pointed to success; it seemed as if the first great blow for freedom was about to be struck.

"Every possible precaution to maintain secrecy was used, and we felt sure of success.

"Suddenly, nearly all our members were taken seriously ill; within a few hours all were dead, with the exception of six.

"How these few were saved, it is now my duty to tell you.

"It was discovered by one of our number, Dr. Calvert Hathaway, that, through the treachery of another member, all our secrets had been revealed from the first to outsiders, and that a plot had been formed to kill us all.

"A subtle poison, concocted by a certain eminent European chemist, now dead, had been placed in the food of all our members; its intended result was to cause our death and leave no trace of its work.

"But Dr. Hathaway discovered an antidote, which he administered to himself and to five other members by means of a hypodermic injection.

"Out of one hundred men, only these six survived, each bearing a dark-brown spot on one arm, where the injection was administered; hence the name, the 'Spotted Six.'

"Our future lives we, the survivors, devoted to revenge on the descendants of the men who had betrayed us and attempted our lives.

"For years we lost sight of certain of them, but now——"

At this moment the door was suddenly burst open, and a stout, elderly man rushed in.

"Hold!" he cried. "You are all deceived! That boy is not Calvert Hathaway, but Richard Firman, and the man you have accepted as Colonel Regent is an impostor!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### BETRAYED.

In an instant the room was in a tumult. Nearly every one sprang to his feet in the wildest excitement.

But two persons seemed calm, Mr. Worthen and Colonel Regent.

The former remained in his seat; the latter stood with folded arms, collected and impassioned, in the center of the room.

"Order!" cried the ruler, sharply, at which the members instantly resumed their seats.

All eyes were fixed upon the newcomer.

"What is the meaning of this interruption, Brother Duncomb?" demanded Mr. Worthen.

"I beg your pardon and that of my fellow-members for my abrupt entrance," was the reply, "but the news I have to bring is of such vital importance that I felt it was no time for ceremony."



"And this news is——"

"That we have again been betrayed and deceived; but, luckily, the discovery comes in time."

"You claim that this young man is not Calvert Hathaway?"

"I do."

"Who is he, then?"

"Richard Firman, one of the objects of our vengeance, who until now has almost miraculously escaped us."

There was a chorus of excited exclamations.

"Firman is dead; you are wrong!" cried half a dozen.

"You are certainly mistaken," added Mr. Annison, "for Mrs. Hathaway acknowledges him as her son."

"She did so under this man's compulsion," replied Dunscomb, pointing to Colonel Regent. "But she will tell the truth when freed from his spell."

Here the ruler interrupted.

"This story seems incredible," he said, in sharp, incisive tones. "Brother Dunscomb's habitual suspicion has become a by-word among us; and on this occasion it has, coupled with his well-known zeal, urged him to what seems to me a rash and uncalled-for step."

"Were it not that this same suspicion, so often criticised by you, was a part of my nature," replied Dunscomb, heatedly, "we should all have been destroyed on this occasion."

"It is almost impossible," returned Worthen, "that with our membership reduced to only a dozen men, all bound by the most sacred of ties, the strongest of oaths, there should have been treachery. Whom do you accuse?"

"This man;" and Dunscomb pointed to the tall, statue-like figure in the center of the room.

"Colonel Regent! he is a man above suspicion."

"But did I not tell you that this man is not really our old comrade, Regent?"

"I have known Regent for years," interposed Mr. Annison, firmly, "and could not have been so deceived."

"So have I known him ever since our organization," added another, "and this gentleman is he."

Two other members spoke to the same effect. Dunscomb listened until they had finished, then he said:

"You are all deceived, and I shall prove it to you. This man bears a personal resemblance to Colonel Regent, which he has heightened by a skillful make-up; none of us have seen Regent for several years, and, but for my investigations and lucky discoveries, the impersonation might have passed unsuspected, unchallenged—with what result I cannot guess."

"If this man is not Regent, who is he?" questioned the ruler, with a skeptical smile.

"That I do not know, but I shall learn before this meeting is at an end."

"You most certainly will," said Worthen, "for the matter shall be sifted to the very bottom. And you also claim that this lad is not Calvert Hathaway, but Richard Firman?"

"I do."

"Where, then, is the real Calvert Hathaway, the son of our preserver?"

"Here!"

And again the door was thrown open, this time to admit young Hathaway, who rushed impetuously into the room, crying:

"Yes, gentlemen, I am Calvert Hathaway, the son of Dr. Hathaway, to whom at least five of you owe your lives. This fellow, Firman, and his confederate have managed to turn even my mother against me, but I am Calvert Hathaway, and not he."

This speech evidently made a profound impression.

"Your resemblance to Dr. Hathaway is most striking!" exclaimed the ruler.

"He is the image of our preserver," added another; "we have been deceived."

"This is most serious," said Worthen, gravely, "and must be investigated without a moment's delay. All present cannot leave this place alive."

Then turning to the putative Colonel Regent, he said:

"We have welcomed you as an old comrade; it were better for you that you had never been born than have deceived us."

"There is a way of proving my identity," was the reply, uttered in a voice in which there was not a suspicion of tremor. "We of the Spotted Six bear each a mark upon us. See!"

As he uttered the last word he rolled up the sleeve of his left arm, revealing a brown discoloration.

"It is Regent!" cried two or three voices. "Dunscomb has been mistaken."

"Wait a moment," interposed a tall, thin, delicate-looking man wearing gold-mounted eyeglasses, as he rose from his seat, and walking with a slight limp, approached the subject of the discussion. "That point is not quite settled yet, but it can easily be."

He took from his pocket a small vial, saturated his handkerchief with its contents and rubbed the spot upon the arm of the alleged Colonel Regent, who offered no resistance.

"It is as I thought," he cried; "the stain was made by a chemical easily removed by the proper means. As this man just now said to you—see!"

The discoloration had vanished from the bared arm.

"You are evidently prepared for an emergency, Dr. Matson," said Regent, quietly.

"You know me?" cried the tall, thin man.

"Quite well; and I give you credit for a good deal of ingenuity. You certainly displayed the quality on the night when you murdered Jerome Walker—better known of late years as Basil Forster."

Dick, in spite of the peril of his position, started and uttered a low exclamation as he heard these words.

Dr. Matson exactly answered the description given by Enos Gritman of the murderer of Mr. Forster; he was tall, delicately built, very pale, fashionably dressed—in accordance with the description, even to the gold eyeglasses—he walked with a limp; and, as Dick now observed, the upper joint of his left forefinger was misshapen.

The doctor himself was evidently startled.



"You know too much," he hissed, his pale face flushing. "What I did was as one of the Spotted Six; it was an act of justice, of retribution, not a murder."

"The United States authorities might venture to differ from you on that point," was the dry rejoinder, uttered in a tone that Dick felt sure he had heard somewhere before—but where? when?

"It is very evident," went on Dr. Matson, "that your purpose here is not a friendly one, and that you realize that your game is up. You are not Regent."

"I am not," was the reply, uttered in a strangely quiet tone.

"And who are you?"

As coolly as if the act might not have been the signal for his instant death, the pseudo Colonel Regent swept his hands over his face and removed the wig and beard he wore; at the same time his facial expression seemed to undergo a complete change.

"Enos Gritman!" burst from the lips of one of the party, who simultaneously with Dick Firman had recognized the detective.

"Yes, I have been known as Enos Gritman," said the imperiled man, quietly, "but I bear another name. Can you not guess what it is, Worthen?"

And the detective approached the ruler and looked steadily into his face.

For a few moments Mr. Worthen studied his features intently, then said:

"No, I do not know you."

"Perhaps Valney Annison's memory will prove less treacherous than yours."

And Gritman turned to the banker.

"My God!" cried Annison, starting back, "it cannot be!"

"You know me?"

"You—you are Robert Firman!"

"Yes, I am Robert Firman, the man you thought you had murdered, but who has lived all these years for but one thing—revenge!"

"Only to be thwarted at last!" sneered Annison. "You have played a bold, a daring game, Firman, but you have lost."

"Not yet," was the sententious reply.

"You are my father?" gasped Dick, to whom this strange scene seemed like a dream.

"Yes, my boy, I am your father," and Firman clasped both the lad's hands tightly in his own. "I am your father, yet it is I who have brought you into this peril."

"From which neither of you will escape alive," added Annison.

"We shall see!"

At this moment a strange sound startled the gathering—a prolonged roar, which had in it something blood-curdling and horrible.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### FIRMAN'S LAST CARD.

The sound seemed to come from the hallway outside, and in that direction all eyes were turned.

The next instant a huge beast came bounding into the room;

Dick at once recognized it as the orang-outang from the clutches of which Irma had rescued him.

For a few seconds it stood crouching in the doorway, gazing about and chattering hideously; then its small, twinkling eyes rested upon Dr. Matson, and it rushed forward and clasped him in its brawny arms.

"Help! help!" shrieked the doctor. "I chastised the brute once, and this is its revenge. Help, or——"

Before he could finish the sentence the orang-outang had borne him to the floor, where it held him, its knees on his chest, one of its hairy hands grasping his throat.

Then three shots rang out.

When the smoke had cleared away the assembled men saw the orang-outang and its victim lying motionless side by side, and Enos Gritman, who had fired the shots, bending over them, revolver in hand.

"I was too late," he said, returning the weapon to his pocket. "The brute has broken the assassin's neck, and the gallows is cheated. It is as well. Another of your accursed gang has paid for his allegiance to you; but the manner of his taking-off was chosen by a higher power! Let his fate warn you of your own."

The orang-outang now lay on its back, uttering hideous cries, and thrashing its muscular arms about; it was evidently dying in great agony.

"Robert Firman," cried the ruler, his face pale with fear and rage, "you speak idly. Do you suppose we shall ever permit you to leave this place alive?"

"I have sworn to see you all destroyed!" was the response, uttered in a firm voice, "and I intend to keep my oath."

"You will not."

"We shall see. Regent died by my hand; Matson, the son of one of your charter members, lies dead before you. My work is but just begun; I will complete it if I live."

"You will not live. Do you suppose we fear any feeble defense you may make? There is not one of us who would not willingly sacrifice his life to remove you."

And Worthen sprang toward Robert Firman.

But Dick quickly rushed forward and interposed himself between them.

"Spare his life," he cried, "and take mine! Release him, gentlemen, under a solemn oath of secrecy, and let me take his place."

Worthen gazed at the boy with evident emotion.

"You are a noble lad," he said, "and worthy to be one of us. It was my purpose to condemn you both to death, and your father must die! But your life shall be spared on one condition, and one only."

"And what is that?"

"That you become one of us; that privilege I am willing to grant if my fellow-members agree."

"If I consent, sir, what will become of my father?"

"Have I not just told you he will die in any case?"

"Then I refuse!" cried the boy, starting back and taking his place beside his father,

Robert Firman grasped his hand.



"The sacrifice you have offered is unnecessary," he said. "We shall both leave this place safe and unharmed, my son."

He was interrupted by a wild shriek from the dying brute on the floor, who now seemed to be in the last agonies of dissolution.

"Firman," said the ruler, "you talk wildly; you do not seem to realize how utterly impossible it is for you to escape us. What hope can you possibly have now?"

"I am a man of many expedients," said Robert Firman, "and I have a strong hope; it is here."

And he took from his vest pocket a small globule of about the size of an ordinary marble.

"What is that?" asked Worthen, curiously, and evidently not without apprehension.

"All my life," replied Firman, "I have dabbled more or less in chemistry, and some of my discoveries have met with success. This is my last invention. Within the thin glass walls of this globule is what I believe the most powerful explosive known; were I to dash it to the floor this building and all in it would be destroyed."

"Yourself included," said Worthen, with a slight sneer, yet with paling face.

"Myself included," responded Firman, quietly, "and my son, to save whose life I would give my own."

"Then it is evident that you will not dash it to the floor, so what is the meaning of this melodramatic episode?"

"You are mistaken; I shall destroy this place if my son and I are not permitted to leave it at once."

"And sacrifice your own life?" queried Worthen.

"Why not? You would take it and his in any case. Allow us to return to New York without interference, and I will spare your lives; refuse, and—you know what will follow."

"Bah!" interrupted Annison, "he is simply playing upon our fears. That little globule is not the deadly agent he represents it to be."

"You are wrong," said Worthen, quickly and decidedly. "I know Robert Firman well, and I believe him. He has it in his power to destroy us, but he will not do it."

"That will depend entirely upon yourselves," said Firman.

"We will try to make a compromise," added the ruler. "If we permit you and your son to go free, will you both take a solemn oath never to reveal this night's work, never again to speak of the past history of the Spotted Six, or to attempt to annoy us in any way whatever?"

Firman's reply was prompt and decisive.

"I will agree to no such conditions," he said, still holding the deadly globule between his thumb and forefinger.

"Are you mad?"

"No; but I am determined to keep my oath. I have sworn to destroy you, and I will do it."

"Even if you give up your own life and that of your son?"

"Even at that sacrifice. But I have given you all a chance for escape. Allow us to leave this place unmolested, and I will

agree to take no action against you for twelve hours. That will give you a chance for escape, and that I will grant. But remember this, too—that, sooner or later, you will all suffer the punishment you deserve. I have worked for years to that end—it has taken me half a lifetime to hunt you down, and I will not forego my revenge now."

"You talk like a madman," said Worthen, impatiently; "yet I have not lost all hope that I can make you listen to reason."

"Perhaps you are presuming too far upon my patience," said Firman. "I desire to hear nothing more from you unless you wish to accept my terms."

At this moment Valney Annison sprang forward and attempted to seize the globule; in the brief struggle that followed it fell to the floor

It did not explode; a derisive laugh arose from the members.

"You see I was right!" cried Annison; "he was only trifling with our fears. Now, fellow-members, I propose that we take decisive action in this matter."

Scarcely had he uttered the last word when the orang-outang raised its arm and brought its huge fist down upon the globule with considerable force.

A terrific explosion followed, and in another moment all present at this memorable meeting of the Spotted Six were buried beneath the ruins of the building.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Help—help!"

This cry, uttered in a faint voice, startled the diggers in the ruins nearly four hours after the catastrophe.

The explosion had brought people for miles around to the scene, and for an hour sturdy arms had been at work in the attempt to rescue those who were believed to be buried beneath the *débris*.

"It's a boy's voice!" exclaimed some one. "Listen!"

All were silent; in a few moments the cry was repeated:

"Help—help!"

"He's right over to your left, John!" called out one of the party. "Dig there, but be careful."

The order was obeyed with a will, and a few minutes later a boy was dragged from the ruins.

Scores of men crowded around him.

"Are you hurt much?" some one asked, following the query with another: "How did it happen?"

Ignoring the latter question, Dick—for the rescued lad was he—replied to the first one:

"I don't think I am hurt at all, though I'm pretty well shaken up. But there are more than a dozen men beneath the ruins."

"The work is going on; they will be saved if they are still alive. But you haven't told us how it happened. Was it an explosion of chemicals? Dr. Matson was always experimenting with something of the kind."

"Was that Dr. Matson's house?" asked the boy.

"Why, yes. Dr. Matson's the smartest physician in New Jersey. Didn't you know it was his house?"



Dick did not heed the question; springing toward the diggers, he cried:

"Be careful! My father is there! Let me help you."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE END OF THE SPOTTED SIX.

"You're not fit for the work," remonstrated one of the party. "Leave it to us; we will save your father if it is possible to do so."

But the boy was not to be denied, and in response to his impetuous demands a pickax was handed him.

He lifted it above his head, but the next moment it fell from his nerveless grasp, and he sank, senseless, into the arms of one of his preservers.

"I knew he couldn't do it," said the man, sympathetically. "Take him up to my house, and I will look for his father."

When Dick recovered his consciousness he was lying in a comfortable bed in a large room, through the window of which the morning sun was pouring.

As he sprang up in bed, pressing his hands to his forehead, an elderly woman and a white-haired man, who had been standing at the head of the bed, approached.

"You must be quiet," said the lady, gently forcing Dick's head back upon the pillow.

"Oh, he is in no danger now," said the old gentleman, "but I should recommend quiet for a few days."

"You are a doctor, sir?" questioned Dick.

"I am. You fainted last night when you were in the act of making an attempt to save your father from the ruins of Dr. Matson's house."

"I remember now!" cried the boy.

"You were brought here, and, understanding your condition, I administered a sedative, under the influence of which you have been sleeping ever since. Complete rest was what you needed, and you have had it."

"And my father?"

"He is safe."

"Where is he?"

"In this house."

"I must see him at once."

Dick was about to spring from the bed, but the doctor laid a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"You shall in a few minutes, but first you must have a cup of strong coffee, which Mrs. Brown will prepare for you."

As the old lady left the room, Dick asked, hoarsely:

"My father is not—not dead, is he, sir?"

"No, but he has sustained severe injuries—though not serious ones, understand. He will probably be confined to his bed a fortnight or so. His first words after his rescue were of you; he described you, and we told him you were safe. The joy seemed too much for him, for he fell unconscious. Now don't be agitated, my lad; he will be all right in a very short time."

Under the stimulating effects of the coffee which Mrs. Brown brought, Dick soon felt quite himself again. The only injury he had sustained, beyond a few slight bruises, was the shock to his nervous system; and, as he had strong, healthy nerves, recuperation was easy and rapid.

He was taken to his father, who lay in another room.

As he entered, Mr. Firman stretched out his hand, saying:

"Leave us."

"You must be careful not to excite yourself too much," cautioned the doctor.

"I shall be careful, depend upon it," said Firman. "I have much to live for."

When they were alone, he said:

"My boy, I know you have many questions to ask me, and I am only too eager to answer them. You wonder, do you not, why I so long concealed my identity from you?"

"That is the first thing I was going to ask you, father."

"When Annison pushed me from the deck of the vessel, Providence provided me with a means of rescue; the mast of some wrecked vessel was dashed against me with such force as to almost deprive me of consciousness. But I seized it, and, clinging to it, remained at the mercy of the waves for many hours. At last I was picked up by a New York bark, more dead than alive. A long illness followed, during which I was delirious. When I became physically well my mind was gone—I had no recollection of my past life—I could not even remember my own name. The captain of the bark, upon its arrival at port, placed me in an asylum, and there I remained for years. At last a doctor, more clever than those in attendance at the institution, saw me, and at once perceived the cause of my complaint. 'A bit of bone chipped from the skull is pressing against the man's brain,' he said. 'I will remove it and he will recover.' The operation was performed, and I was a well man; but the years since the night when I was pushed from the deck of the vessel by Annison were a blank. I returned to my home, but it was forsaken; my wife was dead.

"I resolved, my son, not to declare myself to you until my oath to exterminate the Spotted Six had been fulfilled.

"As Enos Gritman, the detective, I have done much successful work; and no one until last night has suspected my identity—not even my old friend, Jerome Walker, whom you knew as Basil Forster.

"I allowed nothing to turn me from my purpose; I was constantly accumulating evidence against the Spotted Six.

"Their act in assassinating Forster and plotting cleverly to allow the guilt to fall upon you somewhat hastened my action, and I began the work which ended last night."

"But, father," interrupted Dick, "how were you able to give such an exact description of the murderer after one visit to Mr. Forsters' house?"

"Simply because I have cultivated my powers of observation," said Mr. Firman. "Do you remember my description of the assassin?"



"Perfectly. You said he was a tall, well-dressed man from New Jersey, and a member of the medical profession; that he had an affection of the lungs and that the upper joint of his left forefinger was misshapen."

"And also," added Mr. Firman, "that he walked with a slight limp, and wore gold-mounted eyeglasses, a London-made black Derby hat and fawn-colored overcoat. You wonder how I was able to learn all this?"

"I do, indeed."

"Yet my process was simple enough. I kept my eyes wide open when I visited the scene of Jerome Walker's murder. Upon the sill of one of the windows I found the imprint of a hand, the forefinger of which was misshapen. The imprint was scarcely noticeable, for even the superintendent did not see it. It was in red."

"Blood, of course," interposed Dick, in breathless interest.

"At first I thought so, but I soon saw that I was wrong; it was not blood, but red paint. The fingers pointed toward the interior of the room, not the street, so I inferred that the assassin had entered by the window. I was convinced that he had not reached that window by means of a ladder from below; how then had he reached it? Plainly by a rope from above. I went to the roof, and found my theory confirmed. The rope had been tied to one of the chimneys of Mr. Walker's house; this chimney was newly painted—hence the stain on the window-sill. I was able to plainly trace the assassin's footsteps, from the edge of the roof where he made his bold descent to Mr. Walker's window, to the scuttle of a house three doors distant. I knew that he walked with a limp because the impression of one foot was much more distinct than that of the other, and that he was from New Jersey, because I found several particles of the red Jersey soil. That he was a medical man, I may now say, I naturally inferred because he was able to so accurately locate the arch of the aorta."

"How did you know he had lung trouble?" asked Dick.

"Because I found two clots of blood, which I knew were from the lungs, on the roof; the murderer's excitement had almost brought on a serious hemorrhage. Well, my theory was now complete. I noiselessly descended into Mr. Walker's—or Foster's—house again, and left it by the front door without disturbing the superintendent and Reddall, who were awaiting me in the room where the murder had been committed. I visited the boarding house from the room of which the assassin had emerged on his way to the scene of his crime. There I found full confirmation of my theory. A servant, under the inspiring influence of a five-dollar bill, told me about a tall, thin gentleman with gold-mounted eyeglasses and a fawn-colored overcoat, who had stopped in the house three days and departed suddenly that morning, leaving his hat behind him and taking that of another boarder by mistake. I saw the hat; it was a London-made Derby. The room occupied by this gentleman, who called himself James Simth, was the third story, back, in which was a closet containing a ladder which led to the scuttle. And now,

my boy, you know the whole story. Of course the ivory stiletto and the envelope with your address upon it were prepared in advance and left purposely to fasten the crime on you."

Dick was about to speak, but his father interrupted him.

"Now, my boy, you must go and learn for me what has become of the other victims of the explosion. I feel sure that Hathaway escaped, for I saw him leave the room very hastily when I produced the globule; he had not the courage of the others. Go at once, and do not return until you can tell me all."

\* \* \* \* \*

The result of Dick's inquiries may be briefly stated. Every one in the meeting room of the Spotted Six had been killed, except Hathaway, who had made his escape before the explosion, and Valney Annison, who, terribly injured, lay between life and death in a neighboring house.

All the hopes of Robert Firman and his son centered in Annison, whom they hoped to induce to make a full confession of the manner of Jerome Walker's murder.

They succeeded; an hour before his death, which occurred within twenty-four hours after the explosion, he signed a confession completely exonerating Dick.

The strange story was made known to the authorities, and Dick Firman was free.

Calvert Hathaway was recaptured within a week after his escape and returned to Sing Sing as Henry Earl.

Robert Firman was as good as his word; his influence with the governor was sufficient to secure the young man's pardon; to-day Hathaway, under his own name, is a successful business man in a city not many miles from New York.

A word of explanation as to the manner of Dick Firman's escape, and we are done. It was managed by means of the remarkable hypnotic powers possessed by his father, and taught to him by "Enos Gritman"—the same power that enabled the boy to wield so strange an influence over Irma.

Dick was placed in a hypnotic sleep resembling death, and resuscitated at the proper time. How the scheme was almost exposed by Reddall has already been related.

Robert Firman and Mrs. Hathaway became man and wife a few months after the annihilation of the Spotted Six. New York is still their home. Dick and Irma live with them; but it is rumored that in a year or so they will occupy the adjoining house as Mr. and Mrs. Richard Firman.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 6, will contain "The Winged Demon; or, the Gold King of the Yukon," by William G. Patten. This is one of the finest stories ever written by this celebrated author. It deals with the adventures of a brave American lad in the mysterious land of the midnight sun and of a horrible creature—half bird and half beast—that spread terror in the vicinity of the Yukon.

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